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# You want me to do what? How Iowa's secondary school principals are adjusting to their new roles in light of the Teacher Leadership Initiative

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**You want me to do what? How Iowa's secondary school principals are adjusting to their new roles in light of the Teacher Leadership Initiative**

by

**Lori Phillips**

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:  
Joanne Marshall, Major Professor  
Jan Westerman-Beatty  
Anne Foegen  
Greg Robinson  
Daniel Spikes

The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2018

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## **DEDICATION**

The study is dedicated to the people who believe that education can change the world.

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**NOMENCLATURE**

AEA	Area Education Agency
AIR	American Institute of Research
CBAM	Concerns-Based Adoption Model
CCSSI	Common Core State Standards Initiative
ISLLC	Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium
ISSL	Iowa Standards for School Leaders
SAI	School Administrators of Iowa
TLC	Teacher Leadership and Compensation



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## **ABSTRACT**

In 2013 the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation planning grant (TLC) committed to providing 150 million dollars annually toward rewarding effective teachers with leadership opportunities and higher pay, attracting promising new teachers with competitive starting salaries, and fostering greater collaboration for all teachers to learn from one another. One-quarter of each district's teaching staff is now assuming a leadership role by assisting their colleagues in collecting meaningful student data, analyzing student achievement results, and utilizing the findings in order to improve teacher instruction (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2013). These leadership responsibilities had typically been attended to by the building principal, whose job description over the past decade has been shifting away from a traditional managerial position toward an instructional leadership role.

While both principal and teacher leadership roles are defined by the Iowa Standards for School Leaders and the Iowa Teaching Standards, it remains unclear as to how these roles are enacted on a daily basis within the school. This study sought to gain a deeper understanding of principals' viewpoints regarding the changes brought about by Teacher Leadership Initiative (TLI), and to understand how principals' perceptions of their support from central office administration, including from the superintendent and central office administrators influenced the principals' understanding of their roles as they navigated this change in leadership structure.

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 12 secondary principals from Iowa schools were conducted on two separate occasions over a period of two months. Hall's Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) served as the conceptual framework for this

study as the researcher examined how principals managed change within their positions in order to enlighten and elucidate both the academic and mainstream reader on the complexities of the daily interactions among district-level staff, principals, and teacher leaders within various school contexts.

Findings revealed that principals faced a spectrum of emotion as they implemented the teacher leadership initiative. Principals reported feeling optimistic and hopeful about the possibilities that teacher leadership holds for improved teaching and learning. However, they also expressed a variety of concerns as they worked through the steps of implementation. At times, principals experienced personal concerns such as anxiety, jealousy and isolation. Other times, principals felt unsure they had the necessary knowledge and skills to do the new work brought forth by teacher leadership. Principals reported feeling frustrated that there was never enough time in a day to complete their work. Still, in other instances, principals worried about whether teacher leadership was having a strong enough impact on teacher instruction and student learning that would justify the state funding allocated to the initiative. Principals expressed additional concerns related to the guidelines within the teacher leader initiative. They felt that some of the required elements provided obstacles to their work, causing them to hire unnecessary positions, or place teachers in positions that were not best aligned with the teachers' knowledge and skills.

The study found that principals were more likely to plan and implement initiatives from a building level, whereas, prior to teacher leadership, most of the professional development for teacher had originated at the district level. Finally, the study found that principals need ongoing support from central office administrators. Principals voiced the

need for additional networking opportunities with other Iowa principals who are implementing teacher leadership, research-based resources that align with district initiatives, and recommended training for coaching teacher leaders. Principals believe these supports would assist them in implementing a teacher leadership program that improves teaching and learning in Iowa's classrooms.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been in a precarious situation where you felt you needed to be perceived as perfect? For me, it was my first interview for my first real teaching job, and I desperately wanted to appear textbook flawless. I answered the committee's questions with the skill of a memorized machine. Teachers laughed at my subtle humor and the superintendent realized he had some loose connection to my third cousin so he was assured that I came from a "good family"; yes, things were going well. I had only ten minutes to go and it required a one-on-one meeting with the principal. We moved to his office where he did most of the talking. He gave me a tour and asked if I had any final questions. The job was mine and I could feel the celebratory shower of salary, health insurance, and a tax-sheltered annuity. Angels may have been singing from the sky as I basked in the glory of independence from my parents. Just two minutes to go when he asked if I had any final questions. Honestly, I had only one, and my curiosity dominated. I began, "So, . . . if you have a business manager to oversee the budget, and an assistant principal to manage your discipline. . .well. . .what do *you* do?" He leaned back in his chair and chuckled heartily. Then he slowly leaned forward, looking me straight in the eye and said, "How about you join our team so that you can find out?"

I took the position and worked with that principal for six years. During that time, I noted that his job changed frequently depending on the nature of the action of others. For instance, if a colleague was struggling, he spent a great deal of time counseling and organizing supportive structures for that teacher. If a new legislative mandate was passed, he would spend more time with his administrative leadership team, planning for implementation. What I found most intriguing, however, is how the principal's job changed

given the strengths of the various support positions he had available. For example, when the new curriculum director assumed responsibility for the standards documents, the principal's attention shifted toward improving the school climate. When the new guidance counselor took charge of school climate, the principal focused more on supporting quality instruction.

While the field of education has changed with the creation of teacher leadership positions, I was curious to discover how principals felt about sharing the responsibility for assuring quality instruction in every classroom. Additionally, I wanted to discover how principals perceived the level of support they received from district office administrators as they adjusted to sharing leadership responsibilities with teacher leaders.

I focused specifically on secondary principals, because the organizational context at the secondary level is quite different than that at the elementary (Firestone, 1984). A principal of a large secondary school requires different capacities than the principal who serves in a small elementary school (Leithwood et al., 2004). For example, by sixth or seventh grade, school-sponsored sports, clubs, and extra-curricular activities have become a part of the child's school day. Principals are expected to oversee these practices and events, which occur both before and after school; consequently, a secondary principal's day become much longer than an elementary principal's. This additional time commitment could be as much as an additional three to five hours per day, leaving less time before and after school to address academic issues (Firestone, 1984).

The job of a secondary school principal can be overwhelming, with a number of expectations imposed on the position from a wide variety of stakeholders (Leithwood & et al., 1997). In efforts to gain a deeper understanding of what the job entails, researchers

have categorized the responsibilities into specific roles, such as change agent (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), disciplinarian (Copland, 2001), and lead learner (Danielson, 2005), and then identified which of these are most effective in influencing student learning. Researchers vary slightly in their findings over which actions produce the most positive results. For instance, DuFour and Marzano (2009) believe that principals who create structures supporting collaborative teams will have the strongest impact, while Hattie (2015) has shown that leaders who demonstrate to teachers and student what success looks like will experience meaningful results. Regardless a number of studies have provided principals with recommended actions that will assist them in prioritizing their time and streamlining their duties. Moreover, the highly productive strategies that are suggested give principals several tools from various researchers to allow principals to effectively focus on the responsibilities that have been shown to produce the most successful outcomes for students. Yet, new state and federal mandates such as implementation of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act all require new responsibilities that can encroach on the principal's time. At the same time, none of the old responsibilities have been eliminated. The result is that the job has become extremely difficult for one person to do—let alone to do well.

Iowa lawmakers passed legislation in 2013 to allow for the creation of teacher leadership roles, in hopes of establishing a system that could provide avenues for leadership duties to be shared. The Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLC) assigned funding for new positions focused on a shared leadership structure where teacher

leaders would assume a portion of the responsibilities previously held by principals. The guidelines in the legislation specified that the leadership duties assumed by teacher leaders should focus on coaching, mentoring, and observing other teachers. Additionally, teacher leaders would assist in the planning, development, and implementation of curriculum and professional development. The intent of the legislation, which was officially launched in the 2014-15 academic year, was to assist teachers in learning and implementing the research-based instructional strategies that had shown solid evidence of improving student learning. As long as the general criterion from the state plan was satisfied, local administrative teams had the freedom to develop unique plans that met the local needs of each individual district.

Now, four years later, all 333 school districts in Iowa have implemented a teacher leadership program in their districts, and one in four licensed teachers in the state is expected to hold some type of leadership role (Ryan, 2016). This study examined how 12 secondary school principals in Iowa responded to this significant shift in organizational structure. The researcher investigated how principals are managing the change process. For instance, were principals worried about how the change affected them personally, or were they concerned with how the change dictated their daily work? Perhaps they were focused on how the change impacted the students and their learning. The research also examined the types of support the principals perceived they obtained from central office administrators as they implemented the teacher leadership initiative. Overall, this study explored how principals experienced the evolution of their positions in light of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System in Iowa and how principals perceived that central office administrators supported them through this significant school leadership change.



### **Problem Statement**

School policy changes over the past two decades have significantly altered the work of school principals (Sebastian, Camburn, & Sillane, 2017). The additional demands along with the multiple and diverse responsibilities placed upon them from a variety of stakeholders has changed the ways principals conduct their days (Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015). In response to the overwhelming demands on principal positions, schools are hiring teacher leaders and developing systems that encourage increased collaborative leadership. In turn, instructional leadership responsibilities are being partially assumed by other staff members within the building (Harrison & Killion, 2007). While the principal position has always been ambiguous and highly dependent on the personal characteristics and past experiences of the individual (Gaziel, 2003), it has become more complex given the current expectation of the principal to share leadership duties with teacher leaders. Role clarity is crucial in order for one to feel commitment to the organization (Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2011), so principals need to fully understand their own roles as well as these new teacher leadership roles. It is imperative that they realize the responsibility placed upon them to provide support and guidance for the teacher leaders, and they need to gain insight into how teacher leadership influences their roles as principals. Through this knowledge and reflection, principals will be better prepared to lead all staff toward providing a learning environment of excellence and high academic achievement for all students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The Iowa Legislature established the TLC System in response to overwhelmingly favorable research that showed teacher leaders would help improve student learning (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2014). So, how does this system play out in Iowa

schools? Because the state is currently in the fourth year of implementation of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System, educational scholars are at the stage of measuring the outcomes of this program. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted an evaluation of the program in December 2016 and 2017. Findings from the reports showed that while student achievement fell slightly, educators felt the professional climate and teacher instruction were positively influenced (Citkowitz, Brown-Sims, Williams, & Gerdeman, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to delve deeper than the surveys and focus groups used in the AIR evaluations in order to capture the essence of how principals were reacting to this change. Through the use of in-depth personal interviews with 12 secondary school principals, I gathered data regarding principals' perceptions of how their jobs are evolving. Because the teacher leadership role includes one in every four teachers in Iowa, it is imperative to hear first-hand accounts of how this leadership shift is affecting school principals and their daily work. Additionally, it is important to learn how principals believe that central office administrators are supporting them as they work through this significant change in leadership structure. This study utilized personal interviews with secondary principals who have worked alongside teacher leaders and experienced the daily changes that were brought about due to the creation of these new roles. Specifically, the study focused on understanding the thoughts and feelings of secondary school principals who have implemented the Teacher Leadership Initiative for at least a year and a half, but up to as many as four years.

I utilized Hall and Hord's (1987) Stages of Concern model which found that people experience a personal reaction to change, and this reaction is more of a process than an

event. People affected by the change will shift back and forth through a variety of stages, continually making process toward full implementation (Hall, 2010). Hall (1979) has shown that the individual is the unit for analysis and it is important to discover where the individual falls in terms of the implementation process. Once a researcher discovers where the participant falls within the levels of implementation, he or she can then offer suggestions on the coinciding supports that could assist the participant in moving to a higher level of implementation (Hall, 2010). For instance, one participant may be a nonuser who needs additional information, while another may have just started implementation and needs assistance in scheduling or gathering resources (Hall, 2010). When working with principals to assist them in supporting a new initiative such as Teacher Leadership, Hall (2005) has shown it is also crucial to address personal aspects of a change. Failure to recognize where a principal falls in the concern stage and to offer coinciding supports could lead to higher resistance and perhaps even a failure of the change to occur (Hall et al., 2005). For instance, if the principal is at the Self Stage, he or she may need reflective conversations; however, if the principal were at the Impact Stage, he or she would need assistance in analyzing evaluative data to understand if the change is making a difference. By utilizing Hall's work, one is able to align the principal's stage of concern with the specific area of support that the principal may need.

My intent in this study was to address the personal side of change for principals as I gained insight into how principal duties and priorities may have evolved given the addition of teacher leaders. I examined how principals were dealing with this change in leadership structure, and I explored whether the principals' feelings toward central office staff's

expectations and support might affect principals' reactions and responses to the Teacher Leadership Initiative.

### **Research Questions**

The first research question for this study was: How are principals responding to the change in their roles in light of the Teacher Leadership Initiative? The second question explored how principals perceived the levels of supports they received from central office administrators as they responded to this significant change in leadership structure.

To answer these questions, I interviewed these 12 principals on two separate occasions, regarding their perceptions of their changing duties in light of the teacher leadership initiative and the types of supports they received from central office administrators throughout the implementation process. In the first interview, I wanted to gather preliminary insight regarding their feelings about the leadership change, and then I followed up during a second interview with more specific questions based on their initial responses. My questions were focused on how the principals currently spend their time at work, and how they feel about their routines changing given the addition of teacher leadership roles. The interview method allowed me to capture their honest thoughts and feelings regarding the evolution of the principals' work. Additionally, I asked them whether they felt supported by the superintendent and directors in the central office and whether they desired additional supports as they worked their way through various levels of concern toward full implementation. I also conducted a document review, examining each district's teacher leadership plans and year end reports in order to discover whether unique additions to their local plans may have influenced how they were responding to teacher leadership.

### **Significance**

Theorists have increasingly underscored the claim that strong principal leadership is an essential component of a thriving educational system (Hord, 1987). According to the Iowa Department of Education (2015), principal support is crucial to the success of a teacher leadership program. Now, through the teacher leadership initiative, the principal is being offered help in this important job with the addition of teacher leaders. The state has earmarked considerable financial resources to support this program (Wise, 2013); therefore, principals are being held accountable to show taxpayers that the money has been spent wisely. The principal needs to understand the state's commitment behind the new TLC structure, the value of teacher leadership, and most importantly, how the new leadership positions will affect the principal's own stature within the system. Further insight into how principals perceive their new roles will be helpful as central office administrators consider resources and assistance principals may need to guide their work as they support teacher leaders within their buildings.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how principals reflect upon their experiences as they undergo the phenomenon of managing the change process brought forth by teacher leadership within their districts. Principals were asked to describe their work, specifically regarding what has changed given the addition of teacher leadership roles and how they have internalized their feelings about these changes. This study also focused on principals' perceptions about how the central office administrators, specifically the superintendent and directors, supported the principal as he or she experienced this transformation in leadership structure.

Chapter 2 provides an inquiry into the development of the contemporary educational leadership structure via a review of the key literature by a number of diverse thinkers in the field. First, leadership theory will be introduced with a focus specifically on the differences between traditional and distributed leadership. Second, research exploring multiple factors related to the building principal's position will be outlined. Third, an explanation of teacher leadership at the national and state level will be provided. Next, the advantages and challenges of teacher leadership will be presented, followed by an examination of the relationship between the building principal and teacher leaders. Finally, research supporting the need for support from central office administrators will be examined.

Chapter 3 explains the epistemology, methodology, and methods used in this study. It provides a detailed account of the data collection measures, the attention to security and confidentiality, the coding processes used, the analysis procedures, and the attention to ethics when conducting this study. The chapter concludes with the limitations pertinent to this work.

Chapter 4 reports the research findings and identifies the themes from 24 qualitative interviews from 12 secondary school principals. Chapter 5 continues the discussion of the findings within the context of the two research questions. The chapter also reviews the theoretical significance of the findings. It then identifies the implications of the findings for principals, central office administrators and leaders at the Department of Education. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 will review the key literature regarding the evolution of school leadership from the sole principal as leader to a more contemporary view where leadership is shared among several educators. The chapter will share the discourse of diverse thinkers in the educational field. Resources consulted include Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Educator's Reference Complete and Iowa Legislative Archives, among others. References in this study include scholarly journals such as *Educational Administration Quarterly* and *Journal of Educational Administration*.

First, the literature review will analyze a traditional leadership model and compare that against the newer distributed leadership model brought forth via teacher leadership. Second, the study will examine the evolution of teacher leadership from the national and state levels. Third the advantages and challenges that teacher leadership brings forth will be explored. Fifth, the roles of the teacher leader and principal will be researched. Sixth, the review will explore the vital relationship between the principal and teacher leaders. Lastly, the research will explore how the levels of support from district leadership may affect the manner in which the principal supports the teacher leaders. This dissertation will utilize Hall and Hord's Stages of Concern in order to determine the principals' readiness to evolve from the traditional leadership role of principal as the solitary leader to a distributed leadership structure where leadership is shared. The literature review will examine the principal and teacher leadership roles individually, and then discuss how the two positions interact as they share leadership responsibilities. The interactions may vary depending on where the principal lands within the Stages of Concern. Additionally, the Concern Model will be used to understand how the principals' perceptions of central office administrative

support they receive aligns with Hall's suggested supports for successful implementation of organizational change.

### **Traditional Versus Distributed Leadership Models**

Researchers have offered myriad theories to describe leadership structures within the educational setting (Göksoy, 2015). For the purpose of this research, I will highlight two of the more prominent leadership theories in order to help the reader understand how Iowa's Teacher Leadership Initiative is helping schools evolve from the traditional paradigm of schools being led by one person who makes all of the decisions to a more collaborative system where teachers' voices are heard and valued. The first is a traditional leadership model; the second is the distributed leadership model, which aligns to Iowa's teacher leadership work throughout the past five years.

#### **Traditional Leadership Model**

The traditional leadership structure has been the most relied upon approach in education for years (Greenockle, 2010). The instructional leader has been considered to be the building principal, and therefore is the person with the highest educational expertise (Marks & Printy, 2003). This structure reflects a strong management style where principals lead from a top-down approach (Greenockle, 2010). Traditional leadership has been defined as goals and aims that are affected by one lone individual (Göksoy, 2015). The theory assumes that one person has the most influence on the members of a group, and this person will also have the highest impact on the organization. This person is able to lead others to act a specific way for an intended purpose (Göksoy, 2015). Yet, researchers have shown that the reality is most principals in traditional leadership roles are not providing sufficient instructional leadership on their own (Printy, Marks, & Bowers, 2009).



## **Distributed Leadership Model**

Distributed leadership, on the other hand, assumes that leadership positions are shared across the organization to multiple individuals and roles among the members of the schools (Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Louis, 2007). Spillane et al. (2001) expanded on this definition, stating that distributed leadership is “stretched over” both people and situations. Researchers state that schools are extremely complex organizations; perhaps too complex for principals to lead alone (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In the distributed leadership model, principals create leadership positions for qualified teachers to work in a focused leadership capacity (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). Studies show that peer influence has a higher association with improving instruction than does principal leadership (May & Supovitz, 2011). In this distributed leadership model, teacher leaders can work alongside the principal, overlapping leadership functions and interactions to improve teacher performance.

A challenge is that much like the ambiguity of the principal role, researchers do not agree on what an instructional leader is or does (Quinn, 2002). As a result, there is no clear definition or consistent application of the teacher leadership role among school districts (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010; Neumerski, 2013; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This finding is why Iowa leaders created a generalized framework of expectations for implementation while allowing districts the freedom to add their own details for their unique individual schools. Within the distributed leadership model, teachers share some of the principal’s responsibilities, but only within a specified realm (Nappi, 2014) for instance, in Iowa’s case, teacher development. Nappi (2014) explained that teacher leadership is a form of synchronous leadership that is shared between teachers and principals in different ways,

but toward similar goals. When teachers work with collaborative teacher groups, they may act independently of the principals on instructional decisions (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010). State leaders in Iowa adopted this model when they created the Teacher Leadership Initiative. They stated their belief that the best way to improve was to empower their best teachers to lead efforts in the instructional realm (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2013).

Spillane et al. (2007) found a considerable variance from school to school as they studied the implementation of teacher leadership responsibilities. If the district office staff members embrace the idea of a distributed leadership structure, then the district's policies and procedures will reflect that belief (Spillane et al., 2007). The evaluation systems and job descriptions could be helpful in specifying how teacher leaders are utilized within the school setting; yet, Spillane et al. (2001) cautioned against completely relying upon written documents, for it is only through the conversations with school leaders that one can discover what truly occurs on a day-to-day basis in the school.

### **Teacher Leadership: National Perspective**

Throughout the nation, researchers and policymakers are working to address the dilemma of placing too many responsibilities on one lone person (Barth, 2001b). Several states have implemented their own versions of teacher leadership, and a few states have been recognized for creating exemplary teacher leadership programs. Chiefs for Change, a non-profit organization that includes district and state education chiefs, has recognized three states for their effective and sustainable teacher leadership programs (Chiefs for Change, 2017). Louisiana, Tennessee and New Mexico were all named as states who were utilizing teacher leaders to serve as liaisons between state leaders and the school districts

to communicate the teacher leaders' needs for high quality professional development as well as to represent fellow educators in state level decision-making that pertained to teacher leadership (Chiefs for Change, 2017).

The idea of teacher leadership makes sense, as the majority of researchers reject the unrealistic idea of the principal as the great hero that will increase academic achievement simply with charisma and perseverance (Barth, 2001b). Rather, experts have embraced the idea of shared leadership and have offered a wealth of research that supports the concepts of collaboration and joint decision making within the school system (Danielson, 2007; Nappi, 2014; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Teachers, principals, and the entire system benefit from the shared leadership model. Teachers feel an increased sense of stature and responsibility (Neumerski, 2013), and principals are able to share their workloads with other knowledgeable educators (Nappi, 2014). The principal's role has shifted from "hero" to "hero maker" as he or she works to support teacher leaders to improve instructional practices (Barth, 2001b). The system is typically able to sustain the improvement initiatives even if the administrators leave their positions, because teacher leaders can continue to lead the work that had originally begun as a collaborative effort with the principal (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004).

Educational leaders have added collaborative leadership positions over the years, often promoting teachers within their own systems to leadership positions. In the late 80s, for instance, the Carnegie Foundation recommended that districts hire teachers to model research-based instructional strategies for the other teachers (Nappi, 2014). A decade later, school districts hired School Administration Managers, SAMs, to assume duties such as lunchroom supervision and transportation logistics so that the principal would have

more time to work with teachers on researched-based instructional practices (Samuels, 2008).

Since then, schools have continued to experiment with teacher leadership positions in efforts to reduce the responsibilities of the principal, and also to expand the advancement opportunities available within the teaching profession (Danielson, 2007). Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) categorized the evolution of teacher leaders in three waves. The first wave occurred several years ago when teachers were asked to assume formal roles such as departmental heads or union representatives; the second wave shifted the teacher from having a managerial role to one of instructional support, where teachers served as mentors and curriculum experts. Finally, in the third wave, which is presently occurring, teachers have become central figures in school reform and advancement efforts. They are responsible for improving instruction, as well as creating and maintaining the climate that is necessary in order for distributive leadership to be successful. This final wave will contribute to all teachers feeling a sense of ownership and self-efficacy within their workplace (Wilhelm, 2013), leading to increased job satisfaction. In summary, teacher leadership programs could transform the traditional instructional practices to a level that the majority of top-down initiatives had been unable to accomplish. This transformation is possible because of a new philosophical belief that the practice of distributing leadership among several people has the power to change traditional methods and improve student learning for all children (Margolis & Deuel, 2009).

### **Teacher Leadership: Iowa Perspective**

While Teacher Leadership Initiatives have been implemented in many states across the nation, Iowa has been recognized as creating one of the most comprehensive systems

to date. Former US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan stated that Iowa's effort to create a corps of teacher leaders is "revolutionary." He expanded by saying that this type of program should have been created 50 years ago. He said, "I'm thrilled that it's happening now, but I don't want it to take another 50 years to become the norm" (A. Phillips, 2015).

Iowa's work on teacher leadership began five years ago. State leaders recognized that one principal could not fulfill all of the management responsibilities as well as be the only leader focused on teaching and learning. They acknowledged the benefits of collaboration and understood the value of providing leadership opportunities to teachers. In that vein, on July of 2013, the Iowa Legislature passed Division VII of House File 215, which established a Teacher Leadership and Compensation System as well as a Teacher Leadership Supplement (TLS) of categorical funding.

Leaders in the state recognized the advantages of shared leadership and set a goal to establish what could be the most comprehensive teacher leadership system within the United States (Wise, 2013). In the press release from the Iowa Department of Education announcing the grant recipients for Year One, educational leaders stated that the principal could no longer be the only one providing instructional leadership; rather, teacher and principal leadership teams would provide the support required to prepare Iowa students to compete within the global economy (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2013). The state legislature in Iowa supported these words with strong financial support. The annual cost statewide is approximately \$150 million per year with an additional growth factor amount added each year (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2015a). School leaders are left to question whether this money is sustainable over time; yet, are encouraged that the state's governor is a strong advocate of teacher leadership systems. Governor Kim

Reynolds stated, “It [teacher leadership] is changing the culture of schools with more opportunities for collaboration and ongoing professional development focused on the needs of teachers in their classrooms (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2015a)

Iowa is a local control state (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2017b) meaning that even though local districts are governed by broad state and federal laws, each district has its own local board of directors that sets policy and defines academic requirements. In the spirit of local control, each district was offered the freedom to write a unique plan, designed specifically for their school and their unique needs. The Department of Education did, however, specify five criteria, known as “must haves” that needed to be present within their plans. These included (1) an established minimum salary for all new teachers; (2) evidence of new teacher support, such as mentors and coaches; (3) teacher leadership roles, such as instructional leaders and peer coaches; (4) an established rigorous process for selection of teacher leaders; and (5) a professional development plan to support these leadership positions. Along with the five criteria, school districts were also required to make good faith efforts to identify 25% of their staff members as leaders. Legislators chose this percentage, as they believed promoting a quarter of one’s staff to leadership positions would lead to an elevation of the entire teaching profession (Ryan, 2017). Using the five general criteria along with the requirements for percentage of leaders, school personnel were then encouraged to be creative and resourceful when designing a plan that would best fit the needs of their local district.

Now in 2018, five years after the initial implementation, evaluation summaries are reporting mixed results regarding the success of the teacher leadership initiative (Citkowicz et al., 2017; State of Iowa Department of Education, 2017a). Whereas student

achievement on Iowa's state assessment has not increased (Citkowicz et al., 2017), districts are finding increased student achievement growth on other local assessment measures, including FAST testing, MAP assessments, surveys, and graduation rates (Citkowicz et al., 2017; State of Iowa Department of Education, 2017a). Additionally, educators are feeling positive about the influence teacher leaders are having upon their systems. The majority of teachers and administrators believe that TLC is improving instruction and having a positive impact within their professional work (Citkowicz et al., 2017). Teachers state that they look forward to going to work, and they credit teacher leadership for impacting their positive outlook (Citkowicz et al., 2017).

Educators from school districts around the state affirm the value of teacher leadership in their schools. According to an Iowa Department of Education's report, a teacher in North Scott shared that the addition of teacher leaders has been the best thing to happen throughout the 33 years spent in education (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2017a). A second-year teacher in Pleasant Valley praised her teacher leader, explaining that she is able to share her challenges and receive ideas on how to improve (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2017a). A curriculum coordinator in Mediapolis explained that teacher leaders are providing direct feedback from teachers, which in turn drives the professional learning in their school (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2017a)

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (2014) published a story about two Iowa schools that received federal grant funding for teacher leadership prior to the Iowa Teacher Leadership Grant taking effect. The authors interviewed Kevin Schulte the high school principal in Saydel, Iowa who received federal grant funding through TAP: The

System for Teacher and Student Advancement (National Institute for Excellence in, 2014).

Mr. Schulte shared the long-term advantages of teacher leadership, reporting that their program has resulted in measureable teacher growth and, in turn, has produced an improvement in student learning (National Institute for Excellence in, 2014).

In summary, the results of teacher leadership's impact on Iowa's school systems are unclear. While educators are seeing benefits in areas such as witnessing improved instruction and increased job satisfaction, the state testing results remain unchanged.

### **Advantages of Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leaders hold a significant level of peer influence to encourage changes in instruction among their coworkers (Wells & Klocko, 2015). The following sections will explain the benefits of teacher leaders holding positions within the schools.

#### **Advantages to the Educational System**

In the most successful schools, teachers, supported by administrators, take initiative to improve policies and programs, teaching and learning, and communication (Danielson, 2007). If the teachers are well prepared, knowledgeable, and committed, they are the most important assets for continuous improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Danielson (2006) has shown that the areas where teachers can have the most influence are school-wide policies and programs, teaching and learning, communication, and community relations.

Scholars explained that while effective leadership could be measured solely by student achievement, the most significant measure of effectiveness is the number of people with leadership skills who stay at the school and are able to take the improvement initiatives even further (Jorissen, Salazar, Morrison, & Foster, 2008). Teachers typically



stay at a school longer than principals (Danielson, 2005); therefore, when they are included in the design and implementation of reform, they are able to continue work long after the principal leaves. Hargreaves and Fink (2004) found that principal turnover is handled much more successfully when a legacy of teacher leaders remain who can continue the collaborative efforts toward increased student achievement.

Additionally, teacher leaders make sense because they are the ones closest to the instruction. Especially at the secondary level, content teacher leaders have the strongest knowledge base and understand the best methods to deliver instruction (Neumerski, 2013; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). They are able to offer a perspective to other teachers that a principal is unable to do. Secondary principals have limited expertise in content areas (Danielson, 2007), given the fact that they are typically trained in only one discipline area. Therefore, unless the principal is observing in that content, the majority of principals' feedback would encompass instruction and assessment, leaving a need for coaching within the curricular knowledge realm. Teacher leaders can fill this void. While teacher leaders' educational backgrounds may be similarly focused in only one content area, they have the release time to further their learning opportunities in other content areas and on the components of quality instruction. In turn, they would be able to assist content area teachers to help them learn about and implement research-based pedagogical methods.

Finally, if teachers are denied meaningful input, they will become detached from the reform efforts and resist what they feel is being imposed upon them (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Teacher leadership positions can change that. Shared decision making within a school building creates feelings of ownership, which can ultimately transfer to "buy-in" (Wilhelm, 2013).

**Advantages to Principals**

The most obvious advantage of teacher leadership for principals is that teacher leaders can alleviate principal workloads (Barth, 2001b; Danielson, 2007). In a national study of about 6,000 elementary and secondary principals during the 2011-12 academic year, principals reported spending nearly 60 hours at work, with 31% of that time being used to complete administrative tasks and paperwork (Sparks, 2016). A recent study examined the amount of time that principals commit to instruction. Trained observers followed 100 principals and found that only 12.7% of their time was related to instruction (Maxwell, 2014). Even more alarming, a 2014 study of principals in Miami-Dade County, Florida, found that when principals only do classroom observations, it can actually cause student achievement to fall (Sparks, 2016). The time school leaders spent coaching was what made a difference in student achievement (Sparks, 2016); yet, principals were not able to find the time to conduct classroom observations and participate in substantive instructional coaching (Maxwell, 2014). Given pressure from stakeholders as well as the increased accountability from state and federal governments, principals need help doing their jobs. School improvement efforts depend on everyone within the school building to assume some of the responsibility. A teacher leadership program can provide the structure for shared leadership to become a reality.

**Advantages to Teachers**

The teacher leadership model provides significant opportunities for teachers to learn and grow within the educational profession. It addresses many of the concerns that teachers have voiced about their jobs in the past, and it offers some options that can be considered as teachers determine their career pathways. In the past, one of the downsides

to education was the notion that teaching is a flat profession and lacks professional status. Veterans and novices were competing for the same jobs, and there was little opportunity for experienced teachers to advance (Danielson, 2007). Yet, researchers claim that teachers improve the most at the beginning in their careers (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007), leaving one left to wonder if multiple years of experience results in a higher quality teacher who deserves an advanced role. When teachers begin their new teaching careers they are continually learning and growing; however, once they became comfortable in the job, the learning curve may slow down. One study found that close to half of teacher growth due to experience occurred during the first few years of teaching (Clotfelter et al., 2007; Danielson, 2007).

Still, this lack of professional advancement pegged teachers as entry-level workers who did not have an opportunity to advance in their careers. Tragically, even teachers themselves could be heard saying, “I am *just* a teacher.”

Opportunities for leadership can change that stigma. Teachers at all experience levels who want to keep learning and have developed the “leadership itch” or professional restlessness can become teacher leaders. With a teacher leadership program, teachers can be found consulting with outside experts, decision making with other administrators and offering recommendations about instruction to their co-workers (Barth, 2001a).

Researchers discovered that as teacher leaders were exposed to new information and were provided with the opportunities to collaborate with others, the teacher leaders were changing their own practice, particularly in the area of instruction (Neumerski, 2013). In a 2004 study, which summarized the effects of teacher leadership on teacher leaders, their colleagues and their students, the greatest positive outcome was attributed to the teacher

leaders growth in the profession. Within this teacher leadership model, teacher leaders were able to extend their influence beyond themselves into the lives of adults as well as their students (Barth, 2001b).

Another concern with teaching prior to teacher leadership programs was the isolated nature of the job (Neumerski, 2013). In fact, it has been found to be the primary reason that teachers leave the profession (Nappi, 2014). Because teachers spend most of their day in the classroom, they were unable to regularly collaborate and reflect with coworkers. However, a strong distributed leadership model can change this lack of collaboration. Through a formidable team leadership approach, teachers can participate in school reform, collaborate with one another to improve their practice, and forge new partnerships with community members (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Experts believe that when teachers take part in setting direction and supporting school improvement they will find increased meaning in their work, leading to higher levels of engagement.

### **Advantages to Students**

When evaluating educational policy, legislators place an increasing emphasis on how the policies affect student achievement (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). While evidence exists that a strong teacher will have the largest impact on students' learning (Darling-Hammond, 2003) research is less clear about the effects that teacher leaders have on students.

Barth (2001b) argues that students will benefit from the teacher leadership model because they personally experience a democratic model of governance. The students learn about the advantages of democracy over dictatorship in Civics, yet in reality they still see the hierarchal model of "principal in charge." He believes that when teachers assume

leadership positions, the school culture will evolve, and a ripple effect will occur. Teachers will begin to encourage students to exercise leadership roles, and eventually the entire school will fully embrace the shared leadership model (Barth, 2001b).

While the idea that teacher leadership could serve as a catalyst to changing school is a powerful concept, it does not address how the teacher leadership model directly influences student achievement. The two evaluative reports released in fall 2017 show mixed results, with the state assessment scores remaining unchanged, but assessments at individual school districts showing gains (Citkowicz et al., 2017; State of Iowa Department of Education, 2017a). Iowa's Governor remains positive, stating that the investment is working (NIC, 2016). Fullan (2011) asserts that reform initiatives will suffer if implementers focus too heavily on assessment data. He believes that student testing results should be used primarily as a strategy for improvement, not as a measure for external accountability (Fullan, 2011). His theory will be explored further below.

Similar to Fullan, a large majority of teachers and administrators reported that state testing is not the best measure of success. They believe other measures such as survey data show that teacher leadership is effective in improving instruction (2011) even if student tests scores are stagnant. These positive reactions may be related to the research-based framework for instructional improvement that the state required in every local plan. For instance, the state required every district to include opportunities for teachers to participate in short- and long-term professional development. Research has shown that student achievement will improve if teachers are provided with effective job-embedded professional development (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010). The criteria used to define the effectiveness of the professional development was that it must include collaborative

learning teams and instructional coaching (Biancarosa et al., 2010). Iowa's Teacher Leadership Initiative provides the structure to ensure that teacher leaders are highly involved in this collaborative work. Additionally, studies have shown that schools with a principal who promotes strong collegial relationships among the teaching staff, and encourages them to learn from one another will exhibit stronger student learning outcomes (Johnson et al., 2012). The changes brought forth in the new Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (Rowland, 2017), which focus on the significance of human relationships, mirrors that finding. In essence, an indirect link exists among teacher leadership, principal support, and student achievement.

### **Challenges to Teacher Leadership**

A successful teacher leadership program offers several advantages for the teacher and the principal; however, one must consider the drawbacks that may occur as the various components of the program are implemented. The next section discusses challenges that teacher leadership brings to the school culture, to the principals and to teacher leaders. Additionally, it suggests the skills principals need to overcome these obstacles.

### **Challenges to School Culture**

Teacher leaders can thrive in the midst of their new learning and growth; however, if the school has a negative culture, the results of a teacher leadership program could be catastrophic (Goodwin, 2013). Researchers share that teacher leadership reforms can emphasize social issues among teachers who work within schools that have a negative culture (Payne, 2008). For instance, in a study examining teacher leadership among schools in New York, teachers perceived teacher leadership programs to be special positions created for teachers who can no longer handle being in the classroom all day (Hartocollis,

2000). Other studies that examined how teacher leaders are viewed, reported that teachers who received too much training found that their new learning made their coworkers uncomfortable, and teachers who met the highest standards were teased and insulted (Payne, 2008). Another study found that teachers may resent someone being recruited as a leader to offer advice that they are not interested in hearing (Goodwin, 2013). Insecure teachers found comfort in keeping their coworkers at minimum level of productivity, shunning the motivated teachers for setting a pace that would make things difficult for the others (Payne, 2008). Likely, these harmful interactions reflected a negative culture that previously existed; however teacher leadership reforms may have accentuated the issues. Researchers explain that the most difficult barrier to reform is destructive social order (Goodwin, 2013), and Barth's (2001b) research supports this claim, stating that teachers report coworker resistance as the largest drawback to their attempts at leadership positions.

In schools with suffering cultures, school leaders may need to spend the first year or two of implementation focusing on the importance of social norms as well as establishing social networks and trust among all staff members (Payne, 2008). Principals can foster the trust by providing relentless, but supportive leadership (Fullan, 2011). Specific actions suggested for the principal include offering frequent feedback on teachers' instructional improvement (Payne, 2008), exposing teachers to new visions of instructional practice (Fullan, 2011), and creating multiple collaborative opportunities where interactions among teachers are focused on student learning (Fullan, 2011). With increased collaboration, teaching becomes more public, and poor teachers will feel the peer pressure to improve or perhaps leave the profession (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

A second cultural issue that could influence implementation efforts is the state leaders' focus more on test results and teacher appraisal for teacher leadership success rather than on factors that show a school is building capacity and fostering purposeful collaboration (Fullan, 2011). In a rush to justify the money spent on new reforms, state leaders search for immediate results and depend on quick solutions which often turn out to be quick fixes with no lasting impact (Fullan, 2011). While state leaders point to state test scores and teacher survey data as measurement tools for teacher leadership (Fullan, 2011), research states that principals should be more focused on building teachers' skills and creating structures that provide time for teachers to collaborate. Principals can easily become confused regarding what measures of success they should be striving toward as they implement teacher leadership.

### **Challenges for the Teacher Leader**

Teacher leaders report that making the transition from teacher to teacher leader or coach is difficult (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010). One teacher shared a case where she had lost a friendship because she was put in the position of needing to observe one of her friends (Bean et al., 2010). This story shows that teacher leaders need strong interpersonal skills so that they are able to initiate conversation about instruction, classroom observations, and celebrations of success (Barth, 2001b) without putting teachers on the defensive. Teacher leaders also need to understand the importance of trust. If collaboration is going to improve among educators, the members need to know how trust develops, how it can be supported, and how to repair it when it has been damaged (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012).



It is also important to recognize what the teacher leader is sacrificing when they agree to a leadership position. They lose time and energy, and perhaps even a little sanity, while opening themselves to public criticism and daily aggravation (Barth, 2001b). Yet, strong principal support can help overshadow these drawbacks by providing positive experiences of leadership opportunities. When teachers who have paired with teacher leaders experience instructional improvement due to their collaborative efforts, both parties feel increased motivation, which leads to great commitment to the reform

Because the principal is so important to the success of teacher leadership, it is important to understand the principals' motivations and needs in order for Iowa's teacher leadership initiative to be a success. The following section will examine the characteristics and dispositions of a building principal in order to gain a deeper understanding of how he or she may react to the addition of teacher leaders to the faculty; additionally, the next section will offer suggestions on how the principal can overcome any adverse reactions they may have regarding teacher leaders.

### **Challenges for the Principal**

On the surface, a teacher leadership program could sound ideal to the overworked principal. The idea that another person would share leadership responsibilities for instruction and school reform would seem a welcomed idea by any principal. However, principals may be dealing with their own insecurities and need for control; therefore, they may be unable to utilize the teacher leaders effectively (Barth, 2001b). Principals may feel they have worked hard for their positions and want to protect their turf, or they may fall back on the traditional leadership behaviors they have observed from their own traditional leaders (Barth, 2001b). Even the best principals might have days when they shun the idea

of teacher leadership and revert from the distributive leadership style toward a more traditional style, especially in times of stress. When faced with restructuring, principals have been known to return to strong leadership over shared leadership, efficiency over collaboration, and centralized accountability over shared local decision making (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). Principals without the knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding shared leadership could be at a disadvantage in today's educational workplace.

Another challenge facing principals during a time of shared leadership is their feeling of responsibility for ultimate accountability. They realize that, in the end, they remain the sole individual who answers for the actions of all the others. It is a risk to delegate responsibilities, while knowing that if things do not go as planned, the principal is the one to answer for it. Principals need to move beyond those anxieties, because when principals hesitate to share leadership, teacher leaders suffer (Barth, 2001a).

Notably, the majority of principals do not shy away from sharing leadership responsibilities with teachers. They understand that neither power nor influence is lost when the collective leadership of teachers increases (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). In fact, principals who empower leadership are found to have teachers who are producing innovative work (Gkorezis, 2016). In other words, when a principal includes teachers in meaningful decision-making, the teachers will continually strive to find new and improved ways to instruct and assess the students. Why the difference in principals' beliefs and attitudes toward teacher leadership? Mangin (2010) discovered a link between principals' knowledge of the position, the interactions they have with teacher leaders, and their support for teacher leadership. Furthermore, schools with effective teacher leadership programs had principals with a strong knowledge of what the teacher leaders work

entailed as well as a high level of continuous interaction with the teacher leaders (Mangin, 2007).

### **Teacher Leadership Role**

The function of a teacher leader is extensive and varied (Nappi, 2014). Examples of this role include resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, data coach, change agent, and learner (Mangin, 2007). More specifically within these roles, teachers exhibit the following behaviors: identify learning interventions, model effective teaching strategies, assist teacher teams in analyzing data, and engage teachers in meaningful reflection (Jorissen et al., 2008).

Teacher leaders describe their roles in general terms saying they are supporting their co-workers within the classroom (Devine & Alger, 2011). In supporting their co-workers, teacher leaders actually perform a variety of more specific roles including: coaching and mentoring teachers; facilitating curriculum development; leading professional development; providing instructional resources; and engaging teachers in collaborative planning, reflection, and research (Devine & Alger, 2011). Overall, researchers view teacher leaders as change agents who have shifted from technical and managerial work toward more scholarly work that includes collaboration, research, and innovation (Lowery-Moore, Latimer, & Villate, 2016). Yet, the jobs of teacher leaders might look extremely different from one building to the next, depending on the expectations established by administrators.

### **Principal Role**

Researchers have found that while distributed leadership is a valuable concept, the idea cannot be fully understood without a consideration of how principal leadership is differentiated from teacher leadership (Manna & Wallace, 2015). At times, stakeholders may use the term, *instructional leadership* to encompass the work of teacher leaders as well as the work of the principal; however, researchers claim that the two roles are quite different (Manna & Wallace, 2015). In this section, I share the research regarding how the principal's leadership role differs from the teacher leader's role. I also identify the range of expectations placed on the secondary principal from a variety of stakeholders and finally, I describe how principals feel unprepared to meet these demands in an ever-changing educational system.

Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all factors connected to student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). In the era of distributed leadership, teacher leaders and principals assume different roles. While the teacher leader is primarily focused on improving instruction, principals are the organizers and coordinators of the various leaders throughout the organization (Manna & Wallace, 2015). Additionally, the principals hold the authority to determine the people who assume key leadership tasks and they are the ones who are ultimately accountable for the success or failure of building initiatives (Manna & Wallace, 2015).

Principals also hold several additional duties beyond instructional leadership. Danielson (2007) listed the big picture responsibilities of principals: establishing the vision, managing a variety of departments, leading a community of learners, and assuring accountability to the state and federal government. More specific duties include crafting the

budget, creating the schedule, managing personnel, and maintaining discipline (Copland, 2001). The incidental duties that take time but may not be recognized include tasks such as jiggling stuck lockers, counseling teachers, or driving a student to his physical examination, so that he can practice football. Duties have steadily been added to the role, while nothing has been taken away (Copland, 2001). This wealth of duties leaves the principal feeling harried and overworked (Jorissen et al., 2008).

With the addition of teacher leadership roles, the principal's role inevitably expands, requiring principals to gain new knowledge, skills and tasks. For example, researchers have agreed that principals should serve as a developer and supporter for teacher leaders (Drago-Severson, Asghar, Blum-DeStefano, & Welch, 2011). Principals should also establish systems where teacher leaders are able to gain peer support from their coworkers (DuFour, 2013). As the principals create new collaboration structures and support the teachers work through smaller learning communities (DuFour, 2013), this high impact strategy would be a more valuable use of the principal's time than completing the traditional evaluation, which has not been shown to make significant differences in teacher growth (Marshall, 2013).

Another new task brought forth by teacher leadership is that principals are asked to provide teachers with feedback on the outcomes from teacher collaboration times (DuFour & Marzano, 2009). This action changes the principal's work from leading a team to monitoring the teachers' work and coaching them on their progress. More specifically, principals will review the teachers' common assessments, curriculum documents, and data analysis collectively with the team, asking questions and serving as part of the learning process (DuFour & Marzano, 2009). Principals need to nurture this work by creating a

positive environment focused on collegiality, experimentation, and celebration (Thompson, 2004). With teacher leadership, it is the principal's responsibility to provide teams with time, training, resources, and clarity of purpose (DuFour & Marzano, 2009). In order to do this work, principals need to relinquish some decision-making power and control, give respect and trust to teacher leaders, and establish the conditions where teachers can feel empowered to take risks and make decisions (Angelle, 2014).

This new work will require an entirely new set of skills in order for principals to support teachers who have differing needs and a range of developmental skills, all which need to be addressed in a differentiated manner (Drago-Severson et al., 2011). Principals will need to know how to identify the individual strengths of each teacher and then know how to use those strengths to maximize their effectiveness within the learning organization (Thompson, 2004). The majority of principals have not been trained for these significant changes to their work (Drago-Severson et al., 2011).

### **Teacher Leaders and the Building Principal**

Principals are crucial to the vigor and performance of teacher leaders (Barth, 2001b). Research has shown that teachers who experience the most difficulty adjusting to their new role as teacher leaders work with principals who are unsupportive or who misunderstand the teacher leadership role (Bean et al., 2010). Teacher leaders' efforts have been diminished when poor collaboration exists with principals who provide poorly defined job responsibilities (Fullan & Knight, 2011). In fact, when the building principal and teacher leaders have not communicated effectively about roles and responsibilities, administrators have utilized teacher leaders in non instructional ways such as asking them to work on the budget or complete administrative paperwork (Gigante & Firestone, 2008).

School performance will improve when principals support teacher leaders in addition to sharing instructional leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). In fact, teacher leaders who reported feeling a large amount of support from their principals wanted even more support than they were currently receiving from their principals (Mangin, 2007). The manner in which a principal enacts his or her leadership practices will influence teachers' sense of efficacy and motivation. Principals should strive toward a distributive leadership style which empowers teachers to exercise some form of leadership within their schools (Barth, 2001c). In order to do this, principals' leadership must establish a feeling of trust and empowerment with the teachers (Thompson, 2004). This trust can be created through a high level of interaction between principals and teacher leaders on a frequent basis (Mangin, 2007). In fact, the greater the trust between the principal and teacher leader, the more likely that teacher leaders will assume more complex learning opportunities (Smylie et al., 2007). Principals need to establish a healthy climate rich with collegiality, high expectations, trust confidence, support, and recognition. The school should be a place where open communication is honored (Drago-Severson et al., 2011).

The principal with a distributive leadership style should work to establish the teacher leaders' feelings of empowerment (Moye, Henkin, & Egley, 2005) and be willing to trust that the leaders are capable of leading (Thompson, 2004). Researchers have found that principals with a high level of knowledge and interaction with teacher leaders were more able to offer their support. They assisted teacher leaders by communicating frequently with other teachers about teacher leadership. They showcased the teacher leaders as a resource for continual improvement and they communicated their expectations to the other teachers about how they should by utilizing teacher leaders

(Mangin, 2007). The principals created structures for frequent meetings to occur between teacher leaders and teachers (Drago-Severson et al., 2011) and principals counseled teacher leaders as they navigated through the challenging task of working with adult learners (Drago-Severson et al., 2011). It was also found that principals who become actively involved in a large initiative or reform alongside teacher leaders are better able to offer support. This finding could be due to the frequency and nature of the interactions as both work toward a common goal (Mangin, 2007).

### **Principal Preparation**

This new work will require an entirely new set of skills in order for principals to support teachers who have differing needs and a range of developmental skills, all which need to be addressed in a differentiated manner (Drago-Severson et al., 2011). Principals will need to know how to identify the individual strengths of each teacher and then know how to use those strengths to maximize their effectiveness within the learning organization (Thompson, 2004). It should not be assumed that these changes in principal expectations come intuitively to the principals (Fullan & Knight, 2011). Principals will need guidance and support as they learn new skills and change their leadership styles.

Many principal preparation programs are considered deficient (Levine, 2005) often emphasizing administrative and management skills rather than providing principals with knowledge and understanding of instructional pedagogy (Aarons, 2010b). Principals agree. In one study, 67 percent of principals reported that typical leadership programs in educational leadership are out of touch with reality and do not teach skills needed to run today's schools and districts (Hess & Kelly, 2007).



Leaders of principal preparation programs understand the need to update their preparation programs, and they are working diligently to offer principals the knowledge and skills they need to meet the modern demands of today's educational system (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Researchers who studied quality educator preparation programs identified six high impact elements that should be included in principal preparation programs. These include (1) a clear focus on values about leadership and learning; (2) standards-based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development and change management; (3) field based internships with skilled supervision; (4) cohort groups that create opportunities for collaboration and team work; (5) active instructional strategies that link theory and practice; and (6) rigorous recruitment and selection of candidates and faculty (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In a study that asked superintendents to identify the main areas where principals needed additional training, the superintendents reported that principals need to understand the range of demands their job entails, know about differentiated instructional practices, and be able to manage personnel within their workplace (Cray & Weiler, 2011). When principals were asked what they needed in terms of training, they expressed a need in the areas of communication, mentoring, and job experiences (Culross, 2011). Another study substantiated this claim, showing that while principals found some parts of their university training to be useful, they found it was their experiences within their roles that helped prepare them to better manage and supervise teachers (Kreider, 2012). In this study, principals expressed the need for training in the areas of supervision, curriculum, and time management.

While additional training and on-the-job experiences are useful in preparing principals, research has shown that peer coaching can also lead to principals feeling more

prepared for their new roles. In a study that analyzed principals' perceptions of their preparedness, researchers found that those who participated in peer coaching felt significantly more prepared in three of the nine administrative standards, compared to those who did not participate in peer coaching (Holacka, 2011).

In the past few years, several organizations in Iowa established supports for principals as they navigate the teacher leadership process. School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) partnered with Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs) and Iowa's Department of Education to organize an administrator support group for principals who work with teacher leaders (School Administrators of Iowa, 2018). In addition, AEAs provide principal trainings, online communities, and teacher leader networks where the principals and teacher leaders participate in facilitated discussions focused on effective ways to work together (Heartland Area Education Agency, 2018). In 2015 The New York Leadership Academy (NYLC) provided training and mentorships to principals across the state of Iowa (New York Leadership Academy, 2015). While these types of supports are needed, they are also costly, and the state recently eliminated funding in all three areas of support. The following section will describe how central office administrators could assist principals as they support teacher leaders in order to create an effective and efficient teacher leadership program.

### **Central Office Supports**

It would be wise for the principal to gain a clear understanding of how central office staff, including the superintendent and various directors, envision the teacher leadership concept prior to working with the teacher leaders. One should not underestimate the importance of central office support. In the pilot study (L. Phillips, 2017) principals

reported needing central office support in the areas of providing encouragement, identifying relevant professional development, and communicating the general expectations for the teacher leaders' work. This final need, communication, is especially important, because some district leaders may be more open to alternative instructional approaches than others (Grubb & Flessa, 2006). Weak guidance from knowledgeable central office administrative staff could actually undermine a schools use of knowledge in educational reform (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001). Therefore, frequent and effective communication among central office leaders and the principal vis-à-vis the vision, mission, and goals of teacher leadership is necessary in order for principals to successfully support the teacher leaders in their buildings.

In addition to increased communication, the principal needs ongoing support and astute guidance from central office staff (Honig, 2012). Principals may feel the pressure of ultimate accountability, realizing that, in the end, they are the ones to answer for the actions of all the others. It is a risk to delegate responsibilities, while knowing that if things do not go well, the principal is the one to answer for it. Central office staff could lend support in this area. They could prioritize intensive job embedded professional development and help the principal see that he or she is not going to face failure alone (Honig, 2012). In doing so, the principal may understand that the work and the outcomes from the work will be shared collectively among leaders in the organization. Ultimately, if teacher leadership is going to be successful, principals need to have permission from their superiors that it is acceptable to relinquish their perceived power and realize that teacher leaders are not a threat. Principals will need training and support to understand the advantages to shared leadership while being aware of implications, such as role confusion

and lack of support that may accompany this change (Wilhelm, 2013). The next section will explain the theoretical framework that was used to guide this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Maxwell (2013) defined a theoretical framework as a concept of the idea that will be studied as well as a tentative understanding of what is currently happening with it. As I examined how principals are influenced by the change in leadership structure brought forth by the teacher leadership initiative, I utilized Hall and Hord's (1987) Stages of Concern Model to provide clarity regarding the types of concerns that principals may be experiencing during various phases of implementation. I chose Hall and Hord's work because not only have they researched the levels of concern individuals experience as they progress through implementation, but they have also aligned those concerns with suggested supports that may alleviate them. It is important to understand where secondary principals in Iowa fall on the Stages of Concern Model so that relevant supports and training can be provided in order to move them forward toward full implementation.

To place the Stages of Concerns in an historical context, in 1969, Fuller conducted a study on student teachers and found that as they worked through their educational program and were gaining support by way of learning new skills and ideas, they would move along the various Stages of Concern, with a goal of ending at the Impact stage, signaling full implementation (Olafson, Quinn, & Hall, 2005). Hall utilized Fuller's work and expanded upon it (Olafson et al., 2005). Hall and Hord (1987) worked collaboratively with the Research Development Center for Teacher Education to learn about how schools undergo a change process. They sought to understand what the educational change was, whom it involved, the effects of the change and how the change was managed (Hord et al.,

1987). Researchers integrated data taken from both teacher and administrators, refined it, and synthesized it with their own personal experiences in classrooms and schools (Hord et al., 1987) to develop an understanding of how educators undergo changes in their system (Hord et al., 1987).

This new understanding evolved into a conceptual framework entitled The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). This model was intended to gauge teachers' readiness to implement educational innovations (Long & Constable, 2006). However, in a later study, the CBAM model was expanded beyond teachers to examine the importance of principals in facilitating school change (Hord et al., 1987).

Within the CBAM model, Hall developed a continuum for reactions to change entitled Stages of Concern (Hord et al., 1987). A concern was interpreted to be a feeling, thought, attitude or reaction of an individual to a particular educational practice (Long & Constable, 2006). The first stage, Unconcerned, represents a lack of concern toward the change. Because the new initiative is only in the beginning stages, participants do not direct much of their attention toward the change. They are aware that something is happening, but it is not in the forefront of their minds. Eventually, the participants begin to wonder how this change will affect them personally, and begin to feel some uncertainty. This stage is called, Self. Within the Self stage, Hall has categorized the concerns to be awareness, informational, or personal (Long & Constable, 2006). As participants move toward the next stage, Task, they become focused on what they need to do. The individuals' concerns in this stage are focused on management, where they want to be sure they are completing tasks accurately. They may not feel equipped to complete some of the responsibilities being asked of them; consequently, they may begin to feel annoyed and frustrated. The final

stage, Impact, is broken down into Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocus (Long & Constable, 2006). This stage brings less concern for the tasks, but more concern for the larger elements of change. For example, is this change helping students learn? Individuals can have several concerns at one time; however, specific concerns can be more or less intense at various phases of implementation (Long & Constable, 2006).

The Stages of Concern Model not only looks at patterns of individual concerns, it is also used as a way to identify areas for supportive interventions in relation to identified concerns (Long & Constable, 2006). For instance, if the implementer is in the Self Stage and concerned about personal apprehensions, researchers suggest providing legitimacy to the concerns and continually providing encouragement and reinforcement. Similarly, if the implementer is in the Impact Stage and experiencing concerns about collaboration, the supports should include central office staff providing opportunities to develop the implementer's skills for participating in collaborative work (Hord et al., 1987)

To place this theory in a school context, Hall and Hord (1987) conducted a Principal and Teacher Interaction Study, where the researchers discovered that when a new innovation is introduced in schools, principals feel unprepared to facilitate effective change. The researchers found that while people assumed that principals hold the knowledge and skills to effectively lead change, principals felt less confident in fulfilling this role (Hord et al., 1987). Through the use of the Stages of Concern Model and coinciding interventions, one would be able to identify the principals' concerns regarding lack of knowledge and skills and be able to offer the appropriate training that would help prepare the principal for leading a change initiative within their schools.

Table 1 exhibits stages of concern along with interventions that one could utilize to assist the implementers of change. The table was developed by Hall and Hord (1987) to be used as a guide to understand the concerns of individuals and then to suggest interventions which could support implementers of change. In this study, the principals' level of concern regarding the Teacher Leadership Initiative is aligned with suggested intervention support that may be available through central office administration. The ways that intervention can be matched to areas of concern will be addressed in Chapter 5.

As seen in Table 1, a principal may be unconcerned with the new initiative; therefore, he or she may need additional information or the opportunity to ask questions. Yet, another principal may be at the collaboration stage of implementation and therefore need different supports, such as opportunities to develop collaborative skills or to network with other school leaders who are also at the collaborative stage of concern. While a clear roadmap aligning concern to suggested supports does not exist, researchers believe this table has proven helpful in change situations (Long et al., 2006).

### **Summary**

This chapter examined the advantages and disadvantages of state and national teacher leadership initiatives. The chapter continued by examining the roles of the teacher leader and the principal. Next the chapter looked at how the teacher leader and principal interact within a teacher leadership system. Then the chapter examined how principal preparation programs are helping leaders prepare for a distributed leadership system. Next the chapter explained how central office administrators could assist the principal as they lead within a distributed leadership system. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the theoretical framework that guided this study.

*Table 1: Address Individual Concerns*

Stage	Concern	Intervention
Unconcerned	Awareness	Involve participants in discussions about the innovation  Share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much it overwhelms.
Self	Informational	Provide clear and accurate information about the intervention.  Show implementers how the innovation relates to their current practices.
	Personal	Legitimize the existence and expression of personal concerns.  Use personal notes and conversations to provide encouragement and reinforce personal adequacy.
Task	Management	Clarify the steps and components of the innovation Provide answers that address the “how-to” issues.  Demonstrate exact and practical solutions to the logistical problems that contribute to these concerns
Impact	Consequence	Provide individuals with opportunities to visit other settings where the innovation is in use and to attend conferences on the topic.  Provide positive feedback and needed support.  Find opportunities for these people to share their skills with others.
	Collaboration	Provide opportunities to develop skills for collaboration  Bring together those who are interested in collaborating  Use these people to assist others.
	Refocus	Respect and encourage the interest these individuals have for finding a better way.  Help these people channel their ideas and energies productively.  Help these people access the resources they need to refine their ideas and put them into practice.

Note. Adapted from “*Taking Charge of Change*,” by Shirley Hord, William Rutherford, Leslie Huling- Austin, and Gene Hall, ASCD, 1987.



### **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to examine how secondary school principals felt about the change in leadership structure in the midst of the teacher leadership initiative. Additionally, the study examined how principals perceived the levels of support they were offered by central office administrators as they progressed through this significant change in leadership structure.

There are some principals who embrace the teacher leadership concept while others could feel leery about it or even reject the idea (Barth, 2001b; Nappi, 2014; Wilhelm, 2013). In this study, Iowa principals were asked to reflect on the implementation of the teacher leadership process and explain their experiences in working with teacher leaders. I included the data gathered from two principals in my preliminary study and added the data from 10 additional principals. While a few of the questions from the preliminary study were changed as outlined in the methods section below the essence of my research questions remained the same. By interviewing a greater number of principals, I was able to hear from a group of leaders varying in gender and experience, as well as in the size and location of their secondary schools. Factors such as these can influence how various personnel conduct their work (Wolcott, 1973). The information gleaned from these 12 interviews provided a rich data set that allowed me to search for patterns in principals' thoughts and feelings, even though their experiences inevitably were varied.

#### **Research Approach and Design**

A qualitative phenomenological approach was utilized in this study. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study in order to gain deep insight into principals' perceptions of how their roles have changed in light of teacher leadership policies. Creswell

(2014) stated that qualitative research should be used when the researcher wants to focus on individual meaning and look in depth at the complexity of a situation. The main objective in phenomenology is to make meaning of a phenomenon from the participant's point of view (Wolcott, 1973). The phenomenon in this study is the manner in which principals are managing the change process brought forth by the teacher leadership initiative in Iowa. Esterberg (2002) expanded on Merriam's statement, explaining that qualitative research allows the researcher to include one's personal reality and connections to a study. As a researcher who also serves as a secondary principal working with teacher leaders, I was able to use my personal insight, as I conducted an in-depth analysis of principals' responses in regard to their perceptions of their evolving leadership roles.

Crotty (1998) explained that three major tenets comprise all studies: (a) epistemology, the way a researcher understands and explains how one knows the knowledge; (b) methodology, how one chooses the strategy for selecting the study's methods; and (c) methods which describe the techniques the researcher utilizes to collect data. The following sections describe each of these components as they relate to this research study.

### **Epistemology**

The epistemological foundation for this study was constructivism because I was studying a new initiative as meaning was constructed among the participants, their experiences, and their interactions with me as the researcher (Crotty, 1998). The intent of my work was to understand how principals viewed their roles and responsibilities in light of Iowa's new teacher leadership program. Constructivism claims that meaning is constructed by human beings as they engage in a world they are experiencing (Hess &

Kelly, 2007). In this study, I asked principals to describe their feelings and experiences as they related to the implementation of the teacher leadership initiative. Because this study examined how principals constructed meaning around the teacher leadership phenomenon, the constructivist approach was deemed most appropriate.

### **Methodology**

Phenomenology was an appropriate methodological approach for this study because it derives universal meaning of a phenomenon from individually constructed explanations of the experience (Creswell, 2014). The phenomenon in this study was how principals are managing the change process brought upon by the teacher leadership initiative. I interviewed principals about their beliefs and reactions to the teacher leadership initiative. Moustakas (1994) stated that the goal of phenomenology is to determine what an experience means for the people having it and then be able to determine universal meanings about the essence of the experience. Moustakas (1994) has shown that when a researcher can demonstrate the essence of a participant's perspective, such as how principals are managing change through the teacher leadership initiative, the accuracy of representing the phenomenon is improved. Merriam (2002) supported that claim stating that phenomenology helps the researcher understand and interpret the life experiences of individuals and then assigns meaning to those experiences. Husserl (1970) described phenomenology as finding the common meaning for several individuals' collective lived experiences, with a focus on what participants have in common. As I interviewed participants, I searched for patterns among their shared experiences as they explained their perceptions of change in relationship to the teacher leadership initiative.

### **Preliminary Study**

A year ago, I explored these same research questions for a preliminary study at the request of an Iowa-based superintendent (L. Phillips, 2017). He was curious about how the teacher leadership initiative was affecting the district's secondary administrative team. At his request, I interviewed two of the three secondary principals in that district. I discovered a number of interesting findings that helped inform my work for this dissertation. To briefly summarize, I discovered that in most cases the principals felt optimistic about the teacher leadership initiative, and were therefore positive about the ways they could support teacher leaders. Additionally, principals felt they were receiving adequate support from central office administration, but they expressed a need for more training in data analysis and leadership structures. The general sense from this study was that implementation of teacher leadership was going well and there were not many obstacles for principals to overcome.

Upon completion of the smaller study, I realized that I needed to alter two aspects of my research in order to gain a deeper understanding of how teacher leadership is being implemented across Iowa. First, I needed to increase my number of participants. While the smaller study brought about general themes and areas for the superintendent and school board to consider, the findings reflected only two male principals who operated within the same ideological perspective as that of the district office. For this larger study, I interviewed a larger sample of principals in order to capture a variety of experiences, genders, and leadership styles. I included the interview results from the two principals in the preliminary study (L. Phillips, 2017) in my final results for this dissertation.

Secondly, the initial study helped me realize how important the beliefs and vision of the superintendent and directors at the central office level are, when striving for successful implementation of teacher leadership. I discovered that central office administrator support is crucial in providing resources, training, and vision for the building principals. If principals perceive that central office administration is supportive of teacher leadership, then they will be more likely to request guidance, support, and recommendations from them, which keeps the principals focused on moving the teacher leadership initiative forward. Therefore, I revised a few interview questions to focus specifically on how central office administration was supporting the principals in their implementation efforts. The revisions encouraged the participants to provide specific examples and anecdotes related to the levels of support they felt were available.

When I asked other educators to read my smaller study, they commented that it felt a little “Pollyanna” to them. In other words, the readers stated that most schools would have experienced more controversy, arguments, and jealousy related to teacher leadership regardless of the position or power employees held in the school. For that reason, I was interested in hearing from principals who work at schools around Iowa that may vary in size, resources, and central office support for the teacher leadership initiative.

### **Participant Selection**

Twelve secondary school principals in Iowa served as participants in this research. I previously gathered data from two secondary principals for the preliminary study and then I added the data from 10 additional principals to reach a total of 12 participants. I considered the sufficiency of data as I determined the number of participants I would need for a high quality study. Researchers have indicated that in an interview-based study,

numbers of participants are not a major factor (Morrow, 2007). Rather, the insights generated from the participants, as well as the observational and analytical skills of the researcher are the factors that contribute to a meaningful richness of a study (Patton, 1990).

When choosing participants for this research study, I utilized a process called purposeful sampling. This technique is often used in qualitative research in order to identify and select participants with a rich supply of information on a specific topic (Patton, 2002). In purposeful sampling, the researcher recruits participants who fit in specific categories relevant to the research (Creswell, 2007). These categories could include gender, years of experience, or their role within the organization (Schatzman, 1973). This study included male and female participants in order to help the reader gain a broader perspective of participant experiences. Seventy-five percent of participants in this study were male and 25% were female, reflecting the percentages of middle and high school principals in Iowa during the 2016-27 school year (B. Lundy, Education Program Consultant, personal communication, January 12, 2018). This study required the participants to be principals with at least three years of principal experience. Their experience may have been all in the same district or could have been in various districts throughout Iowa, providing them the experience of working within different teacher leadership contexts. The rationale for excluding first- and second-year principals was that they would not have acquired as much experience implementing the teacher leadership initiative. This study also required that the participants were the lead principals within their buildings. The rationale for excluding assistant principals and deans was that these roles typically defer to the lead principal when significant decisions need to be made. This

study included principals from large school districts with more than 1500 students and from small districts serving fewer than 1500 students. In order to provide context, Iowa's 2017 Condition of Education Report (2017c) states that 50 of the 333 school districts in Iowa serve 1500 or more students while the remaining 283 serve fewer than 1500 students. The principals interviewed for this study worked in several regions throughout the state. The purpose in adding diversity in gender, experience, school size and location to the participant pool was so that I was able to determine if implementation processes differed among various types of principals who worked in a variety of school contexts. Table 2 outlines the criteria used when selecting participants for this study.

Table 2

*Criteria for Participant Selection*

Variable	Criteria	Percentage
Gender	Male	75%
	Female	25%
Years of Experience	3 or More	100%
Student Enrollment	Large School (over 1500 students)	50%
	Small School (fewer than 1500 students)	50%
Location	11 AEA Regions	36%

**Participant Recruitment**

Because I had already interviewed two principals in my previous study and I planned to utilize their insights, I requested interviews from ten additional principals to

reach my total sample size of twelve. In order to select a proper pool of participants for this study, I utilized documents from the Iowa Education Department and School Administrators of Iowa in order to search for participants who were identified by the criteria in Table 2. Participants in this study were both male and female and they held at least three full years of lead principal experience in Iowa. Six of the principals worked in large districts serving more than 1,500 students and the other six worked in small schools, serving less than 1,500 students. In order to assure representation from areas around the state, I selected schools that are served by various Area Education Agencies (AEAs) throughout the state. Because Iowa is divided by location into nine AEA regions (See Appendix A), I selected participants who represented at least four of the nine regions of the state.

Initially, I identified 30 Iowa school districts that employed secondary principals who matched my criteria, because I wanted to begin with a large pool in case some principals declined to be a part of the study. On December 15, 2017, I emailed 10 randomly selected superintendents of the 30 in my pool, explaining my study and requesting permission to interview a secondary principal in their district (See Appendix B). I also explained to them that if they agreed to participate in the study, they would be required to sign a memo releasing the principal from any repercussions connected to their interview responses (See Appendix C). To my surprise, all ten superintendents within the first group agreed that their district could be a part of the study as long as the secondary principal agreed to be interviewed. Once the superintendents agreed, I requested their signatures on the memo to the principals. I then emailed ten secondary principals from those districts, explaining my study, outlining their time commitments and asking them to consider being a



participant in my research (See Appendix D). Nine of the ten principals agreed to be interviewed two times, once in late December and once in late January. One principal declined the invitation due to family and work time constraints. I then contacted another randomly selected superintendent from the original pool of 30, who employed a secondary principal with the same criteria as the one who declined. This superintendent agreed that their district could be a part of the study as long as the principal agreed to be interviewed. I then contacted the final secondary principal, utilizing the same documents of explanation and signed memo requirement, and that principal agreed to participate. By December 20<sup>th</sup>, I had secured participation from ten participants whose data would be combined with the data from the two secondary principals in my previous study to complete my sample size of twelve secondary principals from twelve school districts throughout Iowa.

Next, I provided each principal with an executive summary of my dissertation proposal and the informed consent document (Appendix E). I offered them three days to peruse the documents and ask questions. The summary of my dissertation proposal clearly informed the participants about the purpose and significance of this study. I then emailed each participant in order to provide additional information and to ensure that they obtained complete clarity on my research questions and procedures. I then requested the signed consent form prior to the interviews and all principals sent me the signed form via email. Finally, I provided participants with a copy of their superintendent's signed memo and the interview questions allowing them to preview the questions prior to the interviews. I completed this step because I wanted the participants to feel prepared and comfortable about the questions I would be asking them. As I explained the study to participants, I stressed my interest in determining how their leadership duties and

priorities may have shifted given the expanded role of teacher leadership within their buildings. I then explained that their personal insights are invaluable, as principals throughout Iowa will be continually adjusting to a new understanding of how leadership is structured in the secondary school systems across Iowa. All 12 principals responded that they would like to serve as a participant in this study, so I moved forward by scheduling mutually agreeable dates for interviewing them.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The secondary principals took part in two semi-structured interviews regarding their perceptions of teacher leadership in Iowa. Prior to the interviews, I obtained permission from the ISU Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study (Appendix F). The interviews provided the researcher with specific details and examples that gained a deep understanding of the types and depths of concerns the principals were experiencing. Throughout the interviews, participants were asked to describe their thoughts, emotions, and experiences surrounding the teacher leadership initiative. Additionally, I conducted a document review of each district's state approved Teacher Leadership Plan as well as their end of year implementation reports to determine how details found within their plans and follow up reports may have influenced principals' concerns regarding the initiative. While each district was required to include a basic framework in their Teacher Leadership Plans, they were also encouraged to utilize flexibility in adding additional items to their local plans that would serve the unique needs in their own schools. I examined the plans and subsequent reports to determine if there were local district additions that may have affected how principals perceived the changes and support brought forth by teacher leadership.

I relied on research by Hall (2010) as I made the decision to collect data utilizing the interview method. When assessing a participant's concerns about an innovation, Hall (2010) offered three recommendations to obtain quality data. The most formal is the 35-item Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ). I did not select this method because the survey requires fixed responses, and therefore I would not be able to capture the principals' insights into their thoughts and feelings. The second method Hall suggested is to ask participants to complete an Open-Ended Concerns Statement, where they would write about their feelings toward an innovation. I did not select this method, because I prefer to visit with the participants face to face, requesting clarification or observing their body language for further insight. I chose Hall's third suggestion, which was to conduct personal interviews with the participants utilizing the videoconferencing software, Zoom.

Other researchers such as Creswell (2014) and Moustakas (1994) solidified my decision to utilize the interview method. I chose to conduct personalized interviews with principals, because Creswell (2014) explained that this method is often the most commonly utilized model for data collection in phenomenological studies. Moustakas (1994) stated that an emphasis should be placed on studying consciousness from a first-person perspective. Interviews are a vital format with which to collect this data.

Intriguingly, the AIR Evaluation Report for TLC utilized interviews and focus groups only for teachers and teacher leaders and collected data from principals solely from pre-determined response survey methods. For this study, I wanted to gain a deep understanding of the secondary principals' perceptions regarding teacher leadership implementation; therefore, I needed to hear their stories directly from them through the interview process. Spillane et al. (2001) explained that a school may have a well-written

policy that details every aspect of a new initiative, but to truly understand what people actually do, the researcher needs to ask the practitioners. My findings regarding secondary principals' perceptions of the work over the past four years of the teacher leadership initiative provides increased insight into what financial and human resource supports principals believe they need from central office staff to keep the initiative moving forward. I also conducted a document review of each district's formal implementation plan and year end reports to determine if unique details of each districts' plan may have affected principals' levels of concern.

For the interview portion of the study, I asked questions that directly aligned to my two larger research questions. Utilizing Anfara's (2002) recommendation to align the interview questions with my research questions, I categorized my questions into the specific aspects I was studying: response to role change due to teacher leadership and influence of central office supports in supporting principals. For example, because my main research question concerns how principals perceive their roles changing given teacher leadership positions, I utilized questions that allowed for principals to analyze their thoughts and feelings about working with teacher leaders. I utilized this method for all interview questions to ensure I maintained focus and validity in my interview protocol.

I began with the 21 questions (Appendix G) that I composed for this dissertation study. Several of the questions were the same that I used in the initial pilot study; however, I revised and added questions based on the responses I received from participants during the first study. The revisions and additions provided tighter alignment to the original research questions resulting in a direct focus on the principals' feelings regarding teacher leadership and their perceived level of support from central office staff. I allowed

participants to expand on questions that addressed areas where they felt more explanation is necessary. I included potential follow-up questions that I utilized as a foundation for the second interview (Appendix H).

I asked the participants to secure an hour-and-a-half timespan for both interviews. I wanted to gain details about teacher leadership in their district and initial insight from principals in the first interview, then I wanted to ask principals to expand on their thinking and go deeper with their responses once they had time to reflect on the initial conversation. I conducted follow-up interviews approximately a month after the first interview, following the same guidelines as set forth in the initial interview. Because principals' work can change throughout various times in the year (Wolcott, 1973), it was important to gauge principal concern and implementation efforts at times when principals' focus may be on different tasks. For instance, in December, principals were focused on teacher evaluations and semester tests, whereas a month later the principals were focused on hiring teachers, registering students for courses and planning offerings for the next year. In the second set of interviews, I utilized a set of follow-up questions, but I revised and added questions based on the responses from the preliminary interviews. For both sessions, I used a semi-structured interview process (Wengraf, 2001) so that participants had the freedom to answer in a number of different ways. I utilized their responses as I asked follow up questions in an effort to encourage the participants to reflect deeply on their reactions and perceptions of teacher leadership. This process helped me obtain a better picture of their interpretation of their personal experiences.

I requested to interview participants via Zoom, a videoconferencing software program that is available through Iowa State University. I explained that in order to save

travel time, the Zoom program would allow us to hold face-to-face conversations wherein the participant could remain comfortably seated in an ambiance that would be optimal for them, such as their office or home. Additionally, researchers have found videoconferencing to be a viable option for data collection (Glassmeyer & Dibbs, 2012). In a recent study comparing videoconferencing to face-to-face interviews, researchers found that videoconferencing led to higher instances of relevant content, more effective processes and stronger control of messages back and forth than in-person interviews (Fischer, Collier-Meek, Bloomfield, Erchul, & Gresham, 2017). These indicators have a positive association with successful consultation, which provides support for the value of a videoconferencing as an interview method (Fischer, et al., 2017).

In order to gain an accurate recollection of my interviews and facilitate transcription, I sought participant approval to audio tape the interview sessions (Merriam, 1998). Even though I utilized videoconferencing software, I taped only the audio portion of the interview. Once permission was granted, I recorded the interviews using two password protected iPhones and their audio application software, Voice Memos. I transcribed the audio using the service, Rev.com, which is a service approved by the ISU Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB reviews all research that involves humans to assure they are not harmed in the process. The Rev.com service securely stores and transmits files using 128-bit encryption, an encryption technique that the company claims offers the highest level of security available. The service provided me with a user agreement that stated they would never share the files or any identifying information with anyone outside of their organization; furthermore, they assured me that only Rev employees who have signed strict confidentiality agreements will view client files. Lastly, the service agreed to delete

my files when I notify them to do so after the transcriptions. I transmitted and ultimately stored the files on my secure Iowa State University CyBox-CyFile account, and I then deleted the files from the Voice Memo application and the iPhones as soon as I was ensured that my audio recordings had been safely saved on my computer.

The Rev.com service transcribed the audio interviews into a Word Document and returned them to me via email within a day or two. Once I received the transcriptions, I sent them to the participants for verification. Specifically, I asked that they review the transcript for any statements that may have been misleading or not reflect their true thoughts. I allowed all participants at least a week to review the transcripts and I received only one response regarding a few missed words and grammatical mistakes. The other 11 participants did not report any other errors or misunderstandings.

### **Data Analysis: Interviews**

Following the interviews, I downloaded the audio files to my CyBox-CyFile account, which is a cloud-based site hosted by Iowa State University. I stored all of the data in an electronic file, separating each interview transcript into an individual folder. I then read each transcript from beginning to end, gaining a first impression of the participants' thoughts and ideas. In order to analyze the data, I began by using an *a priori* coding method based on my research questions, interview protocol, and theoretical framework (Jennifer & Eimear, 2006). I searched for three broad themes, which included concerns, methods of managing concerns, and available supports. As I conducted this second read, I wrote notes in the margins and used colored highlighters to identify the three predetermined categories. I then conducted a subsequent read using an open coding method (Given, 2008) characterized by the annotation of ideas from the interviews that I found particularly

noteworthy. For example, I noted when an idea was repeated several times; similarly, I marked a code when I found an idea that surprised me. At times the participant specifically noted that a certain idea was important, or at times I discovered a pattern emerging. Again, I underlined, highlighted, and composed notes in the margins whenever I discovered a part of the transcript that warranted extra attention. For each transcript, I proceeded to code the various themes and attach significant research studies from the literature review that supported my findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008) . As new information was discovered, I added it to the appropriate category. When I discovered that several themes emerged that provided insight to my research questions, I conducted a final review of the transcripts to be sure I did not miss any aspects of this complex topic. I then grouped the codes together into categories, labeling each category under a general theme. Finally, I attempted to organize these categories in a manner that was most relevant and connected to my research questions.

Utilizing Hall's (1987) Concerns Based Adoption Model, I designed interview questions focused specifically on the principals' reactions to the new leadership structure in light of the teacher leadership initiative. I analyzed the principals' responses from the interviews regarding their perceptions of this significant change within their schools. I then determined where each principal fell within Hall's Stages of Concern Model. For example, when principals expressed specific concerns, I analyzed whether those concerns were primarily associated with themselves as leaders, their tasks, or the overall impact to student learning. I also considered how the positive reactions they had toward teacher leadership may affect the intensity of their overall concerns. The second round of interviews utilized questions that were written to focus more on how the principals were



responding to these concerns and whether the principals' concerns had changed given it was a different time of the year. When principals reported being at various stages of concern, I worked to determine whether their worries were connected to their own perceived lack knowledge and skills, or rather if their anxiety was connected more to the requirements within their district's Teacher Leadership Plan that raised issues throughout the stages of implementation. I also worked to identify how the supports they were receiving from central office administration might have alleviated or intensified the principals' concerns.

### **Document Review**

Document review is defined as the procedure for reviewing documents related to one's research question (Ozanne, Strauss, & Corbin, 1992). The process requires the researcher to examine and interpret documents in order to find meaning or gain a deeper understanding (Ozanne et al., 1992). For this study, I reviewed each district's teacher leadership plan and each districts end of the year reports found on the Iowa's Department of Education website. I researched for common themes, requirements within the plans that were unique to specific districts, and possible additions that districts added to the basic framework requirements provided by the state. I was curious to discover whether districts that added independent factors to their plan would find that the additions influenced their implementation progress or their principals' feelings of concern regarding the teacher leadership initiative. The document review substantiated many of the findings from the interviews. For instance, principals reported the difficulty of finding 25 percent of the teachers to become teacher leaders. The TLC plans and subsequent reports supported that finding. I utilized the results from the document review as I worked to provide rich and

meaningful interpretations of the participants' interview results. As a qualitative researcher, I am expected to rely on more than one data source in order to establish convergence and corroboration of my data (Bowen, 2009), and this document review resulted in richer findings for this study.

### **Ethics**

When one conducts any type of research, one must consider the ethical implications involved and ensure that the participants shall come to no harm. While this study did not pose any foreseen high-risk implications for the participants, one must always consider issues of relationship and power as they relate to any study. I have established friendships and acquaintances with a number of secondary school principals in Iowa. Therefore, I wanted to be cognizant of the fact that these friends might feel an obligation to participate in my study. During the recruitment process, I was careful to reassure them that they should not feel any undue pressure to be interviewed.

Additionally, I wanted the principals to be assured that their responses would not jeopardize their current positions in any way. The Human Subjects Board at Iowa State University required that I obtain a memo from the superintendent of each district assuring the participants that their participation was voluntary and that they would not be penalized if they choose to not participate. Additionally, the signed superintendent memo assured the participants that they would not be penalized for anything they chose to share throughout the interviews. The participants were not individually identifiable and the results that are reported and shared are portrayed as group responses. No responses were directly connected to a single participant or a specific district.

Because a semi-structured interview process can be unpredictable in nature, I focused on creating structures that assured the participants felt comfortable in participating. In doing this, I provided a copy of an executive summary to all participants a week prior to the interviews. Additionally, I provided them with the informed consent that explained their rights as participants, clearly stating that they could abort the interview process at any time. Within this consent form, I explained my intents and purposes for the research and how the principals' participation would help the larger educational community understand how teacher leadership impacts the role of the principal.

### **Validity and Reliability**

I took several steps in order to establish validity and reliability for this study. First, I conducted a preliminary study with two participants to help me determine the quality of my interview questions. While several of the questions remained the same, I revised and added questions based on the responses I received from the participants in the first study. Second, I provided each participant with a copy of the interview transcript within seven days of the interviews. Each participant was allowed three days minimum to read the transcript and provide input into any revisions that they deem necessary. Third, I conducted a document review, which added validity to this study, guarding against the accusations that findings are gathered from only a single source (Patton, 2002).

### **Goodness and Trustworthiness**

In order to establish goodness and trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004) throughout this project, I visited on an informal basis with area principals who have recently added teacher leaders and asked them about their experiences in their first few years with this new leadership structure. Through these discussions, I found that principals were experiencing

confusion, uncertainty, and self-doubt as they implemented the teacher leadership initiative. The principals voiced their need for guidance in how to help their teacher leaders be successful. This insight from the principals informed this study by directing the approach, and guiding the interview questions.

In order to establish trustworthiness, I submitted my findings to the interview participants for review and feedback once my research was complete. I asked participants to comment whether my findings were consistent with the details of our interviews. These member checks verified the accuracy of the notes and transcripts as well as the conclusions I was able to draw from them. Finally, I was upfront with my participants about how my findings would be utilized and assured them that their informed consent would be the deciding factor before publishing any data related to their participation.

Because the teacher leadership compensation system is in the beginning stages of implementation in Iowa, I did not find many interview protocols about this issue; however, I was able to locate interview questions about teacher leadership that corroborated my work (Mangin, 2007). While the questions in Mangin's study were directed to elementary principals, the questions captured the the essence of how principals were experiencing this teacher leadership reform initiative. Another way I added to the trustworthiness, validity, and reliability of the research, was that I conducted a preliminary study where I interviewed two secondary principals in Iowa regarding their feelings about teacher leadership. This research allowed me to reflect on the questions asked, as well as the responses received, so that I was then able to revise specific questions in an effort to gain more meaningful responses for this study. One example of how a question was revised was in reference to the types of concerns that principals were experiencing throughout the

reform initiative. In the pilot study, I asked principals to explain their concerns about implementing teacher leadership, and then later I categorized them by personal, task and impact concerns. In the larger dissertation study, I rewrote the interview questions to focus each question specifically on each type of concern. Rather than the general question, I focused a specific question for self, task and impact, allowing me to delve deeper into the details and meaning of each type of concern.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Merriam (2002) noted that the researchers should consider their own worldviews while designing a research study. McDowell (1992) suggested that researchers consider specific factors within their own backgrounds in relation to the research study. These factors should include education, gender, and background, among others, so that the reader will better understand the dynamics between the researcher and the study (McDowell, 1992).

My motivation to answer the research questions in this study stemmed from my eighteen years of experience as a secondary school administrator. Throughout these years, I have worked with a variety of individuals in administrative support positions, including SAMs, curriculum coordinators, and most recently, teacher leaders. I have found that the teacher leadership initiative has produced the most significant change in my work as a secondary school principal. I felt positive about the changes and I believed teacher leaders would improve the teaching and learning process within our classrooms. Yet, I realized that principals would need support as they adapted to their changing roles and learned how to embrace the teacher leaders as positive contributors within their schools.

I was curious to learn how teacher leadership was affecting other secondary school principals in Iowa. I held an understanding of the teacher leadership implementation plan in my own district, but I was unaware of how other districts had written their plans and where they stood within the implementation stages of their plans. I was curious to learn about the types of support they were receiving from a district level. Supporting teacher leaders is a new, yet critical role of my job; therefore, this study was particularly motivating to me and has allowed me to grow professionally.

All research studies include a level of subjectivity (Williams & Morrow, 2009), yet my education and experiences as a secondary school principal hold the potential for an increased level of bias given that I hold the same position and am experiencing situations that could be similar to those facing the participants in this study. In order to address this issue and add trustworthiness to the study, Williams and Morrow (2009) suggested two ideas. First they advised that the researcher acknowledges the existence and benefits of one's background and position, and second they recommended the researcher bracket any known biases prior to conducting the research (Williams & Morrow, 2009). According to Williams and Morrow (2009) bracketing assists the researcher in separating their own experiences from the participants' stories. In an effort to realize my personal bias, I conducted an interview with myself as a participant. I asked myself the interview questions and voice recorded my answers. I then listened to my responses and took notes on areas where I expressed a passionate emotion or strong belief. I then created a list of areas where I felt personal bias.

For example, as I referred to the list, I discovered that I felt principals had been left out of the planning process as state leaders wrote guidelines for the teacher leadership

initiative. Additionally, I felt that principals experienced confusion about how their role was changing and required support from central office in order to help them overcome their uncertainty. Realizing my feelings in these two areas, I made note of them and reviewed the findings prior to each new interview with participants in an effort to keep my own feelings separate from the participants' responses. This exercise allowed me to understand my bias and to try to keep it at a distance as I collected and analyzed data.

### **Limitations**

This research study about Iowa's teacher leadership initiative focused on the principals' observations of their evolving roles and investigated how these perceptions might influence the support they can offer to teacher leaders. The study did not examine how the teacher leaders are reacting to the change, or how the teachers within the classroom feel about these changes in leadership. While my research considered how central office administration might support the principal, I examined the issue solely from the principals' perspective rather than investigating the views of central office staff.

The first limitation was that the data obtained throughout this study reflected only the initial steps toward analyzing the implementation of a teacher leadership program. Typically, the planning and implementation stages are the most challenging for those involved, as procedures and processes need to be continually evaluated and revised. At the same time, by reaching a clearer understanding of the obstacles that principals may encounter, school leaders will be able to establish structures and procedures that will ease the transition toward shared leadership.

A second limitation to this study was that the teacher leadership compensation plans are individualized to each district. While all plans must contain five general criteria,

such as promoting teacher collaboration and strengthening instruction, schools were then encouraged to create their own model of the plans to meet the individualized needs of their districts. I accessed copies of each district's plan and year end reports from the Department of Education website. I then conducted a document review to discover the similarities and differences that exist. However, because of this focus on local control of implementation, the findings from this study are not generalizable to the state, or the nation.

Finally, the third limitation was that the participants in the study had different levels of experience and education. While all schools in Iowa have had a teacher leadership program for at least three years, the principals in those schools may not have been employed there the entire time. Therefore, I interviewed principals who had at least three years of experience in Iowa, and consequently, have had at least a year and a half experience with teacher leadership. Some principals held higher educational degrees and more years of experience than others, but all of them held a minimum of three years' experience.

### **Summary**

This chapter offered the reader an explanation for the framework for this qualitative study, including epistemology, theoretical perspective, and methodology. The chapter then discussed the researcher's methods including data gathering and analysis. The chapter concluded with a discussion of research ethics and the limitations involved with this study.



## **CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' perceptions of their positions in light of the expansive creation and implementation of teacher leadership roles within Iowa, as well as to examine how principals perceived support from central office staff as they worked toward successful implementation of teacher leadership within their secondary buildings. Twelve secondary school principals throughout the state of Iowa were asked to take part in two interviews, over the span of one month. The participants were asked to reflect on their experiences throughout the implementation of the teacher leadership initiative within their districts. Additionally, the researcher examined the district's Teacher Leadership Plans and subsequent annual reports to determine if unique elements of the plans could be connected to the principals' concerns. Finally, the study compared existing research regarding successful interventions for implementers of change against participants' perceptions of levels of support they received from central office administration.

This chapter provides the emergent themes from the data discovered through the 24 interviews as well as from the results of the document review of each district's teacher leadership plan and reports. The themes relate directly to the larger research questions in this study regarding principals' concerns and their perceived levels of support. Findings show that principals are experiencing mixed feelings about the teacher leadership initiative. While they see the benefits that teacher leaders can bring to their educational systems, the principals struggle with personal feelings of isolation, confusion and lack of knowledge and skills for the new type of work they are being asked to complete.

## Study Findings

This dissertation examined the levels of concern that secondary principals experienced as they implemented the teacher leadership initiative in Iowa. Additionally, the study explored how principals perceived that central office administration supported them as they progressed through their levels of concern. Throughout the data analysis process, I searched for patterns within participants' comments in order to identify themes within the data that were connected to the theoretical framework that guided this study. Specifically, I was searching for themes related to the participants' personal, task and impact concerns. These three areas were consistently evident in the data, which led to the first three findings of this study. The fourth theme was unexpected; however, several participant references to the theme were mentioned, signaling the theme as significant to the findings. This fourth theme that emerged from the data showed that professional development was shifting from district-wide to site-based implementations. These four general emerged from the interviews and document review in relationship to the first research question: *How are principals responding to the change in their roles in light of the teacher leadership initiative?*

1. Principals experienced **personal** emotions to the changes brought forth by teacher leadership. They felt **optimistic** about the potential of the teacher leadership initiative, even as they were undergoing the **challenges** inherent to delegating leadership responsibility.

2. Principals experienced **task** concerns regarding the changes brought forth by teacher leadership. Because the teacher leadership initiative requires principals to

conduct new tasks and learn new skills, they felt **overwhelmed and ill prepared** to complete all that is expected of them.

3. Principals felt **enthusiastic** about the impact of teacher leadership but **uneasy** regarding the unforeseen outcomes of the initiative.

4. Because Teacher Leadership Plans shifted professional development planning from a district-wide focus to a building focus, principals felt **increased autonomy** with professional development and **high levels of collegiality** with their building teacher leaders.

The following section will provide specific quotations from participants to provide the reader with additional insight into the overall themes. The themes are aligned to the two larger research questions posed in this study, establishing correspondence between the interview questions, participant responses, and the overall thematic patterns that were discovered. The majority of findings were consistent among the varying characteristics of participants. The gender, district location, and school enrollment did not influence the majority of responses. However, within the culture theme, principals from small schools felt that the additional leaders brought forth by teacher leadership had provided them with a new team culture similar to what they perceived larger schools had always experienced.

### **Finding 1: Personal Concerns about Reform**

Hall and Hord's (1987) theoretical framework states that implementers of change will experience personal concerns regarding reform. The principals in this study experienced personal emotions to the changes brought forth by teacher leadership. They felt optimistic about the potential of the teacher leadership initiative, even as they faced the challenges inherent to delegating leadership responsibility. I began the interviews by

asking principals to reflect on their past education and experiences in administration. I first allowed the respondents to consider their current role as principal as well as to consider the journey they took to arrive at their current administrative position. All 12 principals described their journey beginning with their four or five years in college and then their joy of landing their first teaching job. Many of the participants held wistful smiles as they reminisced about the rewards of teaching their first few years. Several principals then described the desire they felt to lead other teachers, so they outlined the steps they took to obtain their administrative degrees. A couple of principals explained that obtaining the administrative degree was more challenging, because they had families and adult responsibilities, therefore making it more difficult to be away. Several principals explained that even though the administrative degree was difficult to obtain, they felt determined to finish because they envisioned themselves as school leaders who would make a difference in student learning.

### **Experiencing optimism.**

I asked principals to reflect on how their positions changed due to teacher leadership. All 12 of principals explained how the changes in their leadership style shifted from a traditional to a distributed model of leadership, due to the implementation of the teacher leadership initiative. While six principals used the word *collaborative* to describe the distributed model, others used synonyms for collaborative such as “inclusive,” “empowering,” and “team driven.” Within this new environment, principals described how they solicited more feedback from teachers, shared more leadership duties with teacher leaders, and established structures within the school that promoted and encouraged collegiality among the staff. Particular quotes that add specificity to the principals’

perception of teacher leadership in Iowa and the perceived changes in their leadership styles are included below.

**Releasing instructional duties.**

Reflecting on professional life prior to teacher leadership, one principal spoke to how the traditional demands of his position contributed to a situation where he felt as if he was expected to run everything, which resulted in nothing being effective. For instance, as the sole leader in the building, this principal was responsible for planning and implementing the professional development for his teaching staff. In this district, professional development occurred every other week for a half of a day when students were dismissed early. In the midst of all of his other principal duties, he admitted that professional development would be pushed to the back of his priority list. Consequently, the trainings were poorly planned and not beneficial. He stated:

Early outs stopped because they were not useful. Administrators flustered around to try to get something to do. It didn't work well and it got to be so bad that by the second year, there was a big push around the staff to get rid of it [professional development].

Another principal agreed with the overwhelming demands of his job. He explained that being the only person in charge did not make sense. He voiced frustration with having to deal with student discipline, ordering, and budget while also trying to help teachers learn and grow. He said, "With the principal being responsible and trying to help 25 or whatever number of teachers you have in the building, it is impossible."

Principals were optimistic about the changes brought forth in teacher leadership and they embraced the idea of a team structure where multiple people share the workload

of leadership, especially in areas wherein they may have preferred to defer the leadership role to someone else. For instance, several principals admitted that they did not enjoy working on curriculum duties, which included duties such as helping teachers to align content standards across grade levels and leading teachers in the creation of common assessments, to name a few. Principals were thrilled that teacher leaders were assuming some of this work, allowing them time for the duties they enjoyed and found valuable. One principal commented:

I am trying to manage a building and special ed meetings and admin meetings, and a student culture that's really big [important] to me. I want to be out with students. I want to be talking with teachers. I want to be helping teachers. I want to be assisting teachers. I am not necessarily the curriculum lead and everything, where I think that's her [the teacher leader's] strength, is her curriculum and best practices.

This principal felt comfortable releasing responsibilities related to instruction, and felt this shift of duties was a positive aspect of teacher leadership; however, he may not have considered the potential fallout that could occur when a principal loses his designation as a curriculum leader. If the staff now saw the principal focusing more on climate and social relationships than standards and assessments, a slice of his credibility could be at stake.

Another principal expressed similar feelings regarding the demands put upon a high school principal, and how the benefits of teacher leadership has allowed him to shift curricular duties to the teacher leaders. In this case, the principal admitted not feeling skilled or knowledgeable enough to lead the teachers through the process. He said:

I am trying to juggle several different things, like everyone struggles with homecoming; everyone worries about the winter formal or the prom and then everyone had commencement. I think other people are more comfortable with the paperwork and knowing the Next Generation Science Standards front to back. I don't really care about that because I have teachers that know that stuff. I have a curriculum director who can know that stuff. Not that it's not important, but I don't need to know that.

Once again, this principal prioritized the social events of high school over releasing instructional leadership, potentially altering how principals were perceived by the staff. Yet another principal expressed his relief in distributing curriculum responsibilities to the teacher leaders. He remarked:

The principals used to be responsible for curriculum and that's the thing I like the least. That's not my cup of tea. And I think the other principals were feeling the same way. Having that [teacher leader curriculum] position, at least some leaders are working on that [curriculum] now.

Interestingly, a principal who enjoyed the curriculum development responsibility expressed pleasure that some principals who do not enjoy curriculum duties no longer felt compelled to lead these types of efforts. She stated, "Just because you're a principal doesn't mean you're great at leading adult learning."

This principal felt optimistic about teacher leadership because she felt people were better suited for the work they were doing. Teacher leaders who were passionate and knowledgeable about curriculum were able to dig into the work, while principals who felt

overwhelmed with meetings and student events no longer had to haphazardly rush around planning a curriculum meeting that they did not necessarily feel comfortable leading.

Other principals focused on how the building's shift from a traditional to a distributive leadership structure had been positively received by the teachers in their buildings. One said, "The instructional coach is able to get out there more often with the teachers that need him and want the help, versus the principal putting his foot down because the teacher isn't doing what they need to do."

Thus, the teachers no longer had to wait for the principal to find a free minute to discuss their lessons; rather, they now had the instructional coach who had time to observe the lesson and hold a reflective conversation afterward. Because principals often feel rushed for time, they may be perceived as more blunt, simply stating the problem and telling the teacher how to fix it. With instructional coaches, the conversation has become more reflective, with the teacher arriving at potential solutions, because the coach and teacher have more time to participate in prolonged coaching discussions.

Another principal exclaimed, "My goodness, is that [distributed leadership] ever a wonderful thing? Our staff is much more receptive to hearing it [advice on teaching] from their peers."

While the principals shared the positive aspects of teachers depending on teacher leaders for instruction, it was not clear whether they considered how this new dynamic could affect their own standing with the teachers. If teachers were continually holding reflective conversations with the teacher leaders, would principals lose the opportunities to ever hold similar conversations with their teachers?



**Transforming the evaluation process.**

Another reason principals felt positive about teacher leadership was that the initiative had begun transforming the evaluation system commonly used in traditional leadership. Many principals described the evaluation systems in their districts as archaic and useless. They explained that teachers are evaluated once every three years utilizing the Iowa Teaching Standards. The other two years, teachers are required to work on an Individualized Professional Development Plan based on their goals for growth and improvement. Since the advent of teacher leadership, the traditional evaluation tool remained in place due to state laws; however, teacher feedback has become more frequent, consistent and productive. Teacher leaders are able to visit classrooms, hold coaching sessions, and conduct follow up meetings several times each year. Their discussions with teachers move beyond the standard and criteria checklist of the Iowa Teaching Standards toward discussions about specific student learning behaviors and the teachers' actions that produced those behaviors. Because the teacher leaders can visit classrooms frequently, they are able to identify patterns of quality instruction and share those patterns with new or less skilled teachers.

To illustrate this point, three principals shared their perceptions regarding what they see as the irrelevance of their teacher evaluation tool. One of those principals stated:

I would say the three-year summative evaluation probably doesn't mean a dang thing. But the more day-to-day observation and coaching is probably where you get the big bang for your buck. We used to see what's on the walls. Now [with teacher leadership] we discuss whether students are engaged. I think that has leverage with

teachers as opposed to what I saw you do that met Standard 2 [of the Iowa Teaching Standards].

This principal understood the difference between the three year evaluation completed out of compliance to Iowa's laws and a coaching cycle accomplished through the desire to improve. Another principal echoed his sentiments:

I think that having more eyes and ears out there, better conversations and more time of me being a leader helping [teacher] leaders works better. Rather than I am the only leader and I am supposed to help you develop during your evaluation meeting. I feel like now teachers look at their teacher practice without having to worry about, "Well, did I meet the standard? Did I not? Am I going to have something written up because I had two kids messing around in the back and I didn't know what to do?"

The principals felt that the traditional evaluation tool was not reaching the original intent of helping teachers grow, and that teacher leadership has addressed that concern by offering teacher coaching and ongoing feedback. A third principal agreed:

I'll be very honest. With the teacher leader, I find the evaluation piece. . . I don't want to say it isn't important, but I don't see it is as valuable as what she [the instructional coach] does with them on a daily basis. You know, it's good to make sure that teachers know that you're watching, but when you're only doing it every three years, does it make a difference?

### **Establishing a team culture.**

Another positive aspect of teacher leadership reported by principals from small schools was that teacher leadership provided them with a team whereas in the past they had been alone. Four principals from small schools explained that larger schools had always had the advantage of other administrative positions including multiple principals, directors of curriculum, technology or student services and even an assistant superintendent. Yet, in small schools, the principals were the only administrators other than a superintendent, who could be interim or half time, making the principalship a lonely position. The principals shared that teacher leadership has allowed their collaborative leadership style to evolve naturally, because now they are no longer alone. They have team members in leadership similar to what the larger schools have always experienced. One stated:

The bigger schools already had directors for curriculum, technology and other things. The teacher leadership initiative puts us on a bit more of an even playing field as some of the bigger districts that have a team. You know, before, there was not a team. It was me [sic] and whatever I had the time to do. And well. . . hopefully that worked.

### **Experiencing challenges.**

Upon hearing how principals felt optimistic about teacher leadership, I was intrigued to learn about any personal concerns they experienced as they implemented the changes in leadership structure. All 12 principals admitted that they had personal struggles concerning the loss of their traditional role and were plagued with the anxiety that often accompanies acquiring a new role. The principals appeared to be hesitant at first to expand

on their personal concerns for fear they would appear negative toward the teacher leadership initiative. While the principals struggled with adapting to some of the changes inherent in the leadership shift, they continually stressed their desire to maintain teacher leadership within their districts. Several principals referenced past state initiatives they believed would make a difference in student learning that were eliminated due to lack of funding. The principals' fear of losing teacher leadership initiative due to state funding cuts was emphasized throughout their responses, and they would often qualify their answers with an end remark praising the teacher leadership program. For instance, after sharing a few of his concerns, one principal added, "Just so you are aware, I would not want this to go away." Another shared a concern and then assured me, "In the end, my life is still easier."

The longer we visited, however, the more the principals opened up about how they were feeling throughout different parts of implementation. When referring to the overall change in their role as principal, eight principals explained their personal and professional struggles in adapting. One said:

I am really a work in progress [as I undergo the changes brought forth by teacher leadership]. I won't be forever. That's been a real evolution for me and I feel like you have to abandon yourself to, "I'm not a coach anymore." As sad as that makes me, what I am is the principal.

Another principal stated her thoughts more bluntly when she said, "The instructional coach makes me jealous actually."

The third principal expanded on the jealousy concern. She stated:

If I were in the classroom when this came out [teacher leadership], I would be an instructional coach instead of a principal. [As an instructional coach], you get to

work with teachers and you get to co-teach in [other teachers'] classrooms. "Hey, can I lead the lessons for a week and show you about this?" It's like the ultimate flexibility. And then [as an instructional coach] I can go sit in my office for two hours with another teacher and talk about grading policies. You know? It's like the Holy Grail!

Principals were mourning the loss of the instructional aspects of their positions; moreover, they were realizing that instructional coaches would have time for the individualized conversations with teachers, because they were not burdened with the managerial components of the job. The principals shared that they realized the impact of reaching student gains happened in the classroom, and they felt further removed from the action than ever in the past.

Seven of the 12 principals commented that they felt left out in various stages of teacher leadership implementation, leading to feelings of diminished worth. They felt the state leaders ignored the impact that teacher leadership would have on principals when the TLC Grant was proposed. Principals also felt that their local district leaders forgot the principals when they were writing the local grants for their districts. One principal remarked:

I felt from day one that they left the principals out of planning conversations. Well, I would say at least in the initial planning of it. You need to involve building administrators rather than, you know, let's just move forward. You cannot just concentrate on teachers, because it [teacher leadership] affects the whole puzzle. Another principal commented on feeling a sense of, "Am I even needed here?"

Yet another principal explained a similar feeling as she watched increased collaboration develop among the coaches. She stated, "My connection has been lost. I feel a sense of loss, because I want to be perceived as the instructional leader of the building."

Finally, one principal lamented, "It kind of feels sometimes like I'm the left out cowboy a little bit."

Principals grappled with feelings of isolation, while also trying to determine their roles in working with teacher leaders on professional development. Principals were divided on their feelings as to whether instructional coaches should assume the majority of the responsibility for professional development. While all 12 principals reported that professional development was the primary job responsibility of the teacher leaders, they disagreed about what their own levels of involvement should entail. Five of the 12 principals were delighted that this type of work was shifted away from their primary responsibilities; however, seven principals felt strongly that their input, influence, and vision in professional development should still carry significant weight.

One stated, "I try to make sure that I have a part to play in the professional development of the day. My voice is still active."

Another said, "It is extremely hard for me to not want to go get my hands in all that [professional development]. Logistically, I can't do it all."

This principal went on to explain how she delegated parts of the training facilitation to the teacher leaders, but she made sure she always has a voice in the planning and general direction for teachers' learning. In the second interview, the principal expanded on this thought. She said:

What is different is I am not practicing teaching. Even though to me I feel that [desire to teach], and I want to never leave that behind in my heart. I have to acknowledge that the way it comes from me to the teaching staff is not the same. I am not a peer.

Another principal attempted to explain his discomfort in releasing professional development responsibilities. He stated,

It's hard. There is a human element where everyone feels like, "Well, this is what I am good at. This is what I do. This is how I find meaning in my job. If I don't do that, what do I do?"

The 12 principals held polarized views regarding teacher leaders assuming the professional development responsibilities. While five principals expressed their relief in turning over teacher training to the teacher leaders, the other seven felt that an important aspect of their jobs had been lost. These seven principals reported that teachers were now seeking assistance in their instructional practices from teacher leaders before consulting with their principals, which only accentuated their feelings of loss. This difference in principals' views regarding professional development could be connected to the knowledge and skills the principals felt they held in carrying out teacher training. If principals felt more confident about their own facilitation skills, they may have been more likely to partner with teacher leaders in planning and delivering professional development. In summary, principals have welcomed the teacher leadership initiative with enthusiasm and hope; however, as they implemented the shift from a traditional leadership to a distributed leadership model, they experienced feelings of jealousy, isolation, and loss.

**Finding 2: Task Concerns about Reform**

Hall and Hord's (1987) theoretical framework states that implementers of change will experience task concerns regarding reform. The principals in this study experienced task concerns regarding the changes brought forth by teacher leadership. Because the teacher leadership initiative requires principals to conduct new tasks and learn new skills, they felt overwhelmed and ill prepared to complete all that was expected of them.

I asked the 12 principals how they felt their daily work had changed given the teacher leadership initiative. All of the principals began their responses by listing their prioritized areas of focus for the particular time of year. For instance, in late December, discipline issues increase and special education meetings, teacher evaluations, and community relations are ongoing. Moreover, with the end of the semester drawing near, principals explained that December is the month when they monitor late-work policies and visit with teachers about grading practices. In late January, the December duties are compounded with principals conducting mid-year checks on Teacher Professional Development Plans, as well as conducting registration and scheduling courses for the upcoming year. If the interviews had been conducted in March and April, principals would be in the midst of recruiting, interviewing and hiring teachers, and if I had interviewed in May and June, principals would have been consumed with closing out the school year, examining end of the year data and writing student learning goals for the upcoming year. Each month of the school year demands that principals focus on different priorities that demand their attention. This variance of duties throughout different times of year may influence how principals respond to the changes brought forth with teacher leadership.



### **Coaching.**

When I asked about the new work brought forth by teacher leadership, all 12 principals identified how learning about the coaching cycle and then supporting coaches as they utilized it with the teachers was a new responsibility. The majority of principals referenced some type of research base as they learned about instructional coaching. Some utilized literature on coaching put forth by Diane Sweeney (2011); others cited Jim Knight (2004); and still others mentioned works by Steven Barkley (1999). These researchers have grounded their work in research by Joyce and Showers (1996) regarding the advantages of peer coaching. These two researchers found that teacher skills transferred only 10 percent when offered traditional staff development; yet with peer coaching, the transfer of the new learning increased considerably (Showers & Joyce, 1996). They also found that when teachers plan together, practice new skills, and reflect on the learning, they would apply their skills more effectively than teachers who worked in isolation (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

While the various coaching models utilize the Joyce and Showers' (1996) core findings, each model emphasizes different aspects of coaching, such as Knight's (2004) focus on community building and Sweeney's (2011) focus on standards, all of the models place an emphasis on reflection, in particular, reflection through the use of video recording. The utilization of video recorded teacher instruction, along with subsequent reflective conversations, comprise new principal responsibilities brought upon by the teacher leadership initiative. While the instructional coaches were on the front line of this practice, principals were expected to be knowledgeable about it as well as to assist the coaches as they learned the practice. Not only did the principals participate in role play with their

coaches, offering them feedback and encouraging the teachers to participate in a coaching cycle, the principals also listed the small management tasks they needed to complete to ensure that this powerful reflective practice could occur. For instance, principals had to determine which video devices would be the most efficient and most user friendly for the teachers and coaches. They had to research the software programs that would easily track data and allow for follow-up coaching feedback, and they had to structure common planning times for teachers and coaches to reflect on the videos. Small management tasks such as these are crucial to the success of any practice, but principals suggested they could consume the majority of a day; therefore, they were left to wonder when school was dismissed if they had truly accomplished anything significant.

Four of the 12 principals reported using a Swivl camera that tracks and records the teacher while he or she was moving about the classroom. Six principals talked about how they maintain their video reflective data on software programs such as Google or TeachBoost. One principal shared:

We have a program called TeachBoost that we got a couple years ago that all our videos are uploaded to, and then the observer can type notes in while they're watching it and then we can tag it. If our two indicators are motivating students and structuring instructional lessons, we're typing our observations on TeachBoost, and then we can tag them to those indicators that we use to score them.

Principals appeared to become more enthused as they shared how they were able to move beyond the management issues to address how the video process helped them and the coaches offer meaningful feedback to teachers. One shared:

Believe it or not, the video has helped more than anything because. . .you know how this is. When you go in and you're taking notes on the teacher, and then it's about your notes and three, four days later, it's about, "Well, I saw. . ." Now it's more about the video. What do you notice? So it kind of deflects and now it's less evaluative because they're talking about what they both saw.

When principals discussed how they utilized videos with teachers, they became passionate about the depth of conversation they were experiencing with their teachers. The principals recognized the value of the meaningful conversations they were able to hold with teachers, which only accentuated the downfalls of the traditional evaluation system.

Still, four of the 12 principals shared the challenge of learning how to form reflective questions related to the observations and then remain completely focused on the teachers' or teacher leaders' responses. The principals knew they held short attention spans, often blaming the multitude of pressing issues they were expected to attend to throughout their day. The principals shared that this type of coaching would be an area where they felt they needed more training and practice.

One principal stated, "I am not the best at developing questions that gain a deeply thoughtful response. I think one [a principal] can make people [teachers] uncomfortable if they're bad with those reflective questions." When principals did not feel they had the knowledge and skills to help teachers grow, they felt apprehensive about the tasks they were being asked to do. The skill of remaining focused and asking questions that push teachers to deeply reflect was important whether a principal utilized video or visited classrooms in person.

One principal admitted, “There are many times that I have visited classrooms and I wasn’t fully attentive.”

This principal acknowledged the need for evaluators and coaches to bracket their busy minds and intentionally focus on the teacher, the students and the environment for learning. She explained that now she places a priority on mindfulness in her work, as well as on her desire to learn more strategies to improve in helping the teacher leaders coach the teachers. In summary, principals expressed an understanding of the importance of the coaching cycle, but in some cases, felt unprepared or too busy with other tasks to reap the utmost value from the practice.

### **Supporting.**

Another task that principals suggested was new and consumed their time was the perceived level of accountability they sensed from teacher leaders to attend to all of their needs. The principals shared that they had been accustomed to teachers teaching all day. Now the teacher leaders have few, if any teaching duties, and therefore have the time and desire to engage in deep conversations with the principal about instructional practices. Often, they wanted to hold these conversations with principals who did not feel they had the time in their day, even though principals knew the talks would be meaningful and help student learning. One of the principals’ frustrations was that the teacher leaders did not schedule the conversations; however the other frustration was that principals felt that even if the meetings were prescheduled, they would not fit into the principal’s tightly scheduled day. The conversations would need to be held before or after school, and yet because teacher leaders remained on teacher contracts, their day was finished soon after school was dismissed, unlike the principal who may work for two or three additional hours.

Seven of the 12 principals reported feeling pressure related to the high expectations placed on them by their teacher leaders. They specifically identified increased levels of stress directly associated with the amount of time it takes to address all the requests for them to be involved in every aspect of the teacher leaders' work.

One principal stated, "I'm a whole lot busier than I ever was." For instance, the principals referenced the teacher leaders' expectations that the principals regularly attend their teacher leadership meetings and prioritize the work conducted in these meetings in terms of commitment and follow up. One principal who was new to the district shared how a group of teachers approached him on this topic. He said:

This year, I think, I heard loud and clear right away when I met with all of the teachers in the summer—especially the model teachers. They were like, "We really feel like the building principal should have a role in this." And I said, "Well, that's good, because I feel that way too." I think that's the thing they're looking for. That "Hey, you need to be involved and engaged in this."

Because this principal was new, the teachers were able to state their expectations for the principal's presence, which may have been different than the support they received from the previous principal. Another principal experienced firsthand what can occur if the principal was perceived not to be involved in the work of teacher leadership. He shared:

At the end of the year, I got busy and we did not meet for two months in a row as a full team. It torqued everyone off. All of the coaches said, "Why aren't we committing to this? Every week we were going to meet. They were mad at me. There's no other way around it. They were upset that I was not making this a priority and that I wasn't communicating. I was letting people out of the meetings. We had tears shed.

We had somebody get up and walk out. Like—“if this isn’t important, why did I agree to do this for another year?” We just laid it all out there, and it felt really good afterward. We were meeting and talking about tough things at the toughest time of the school year.

This principal explained that the managerial tasks of his position took priority and because he was not feeling pressure to attend the teacher leaders meetings, he chose to miss them. Once the message regarding his presence was articulated, the principal found that he was needed, and he confessed that it felt good to be wanted in the meetings.

Principals shared that they needed to become better listeners, more attentive, and accept the fact that they should be participants in the work, rather than dictating the work. This was a difficult shift for the majority of them and the changes in mindset did not come without reflection and a change in principal behaviors.

One principal shared, “It [teacher leadership] has changed how I participate as a principal on our district leadership team. The team is really a lot more teacher voice. I say hardly anything, nor do the other principals.” Another principal added, “I listen a lot. I’m not interjecting myself into their agenda unless it would add clarity towards the district vision.”

Principals were finding that their influence was having an effect more behind the scenes. Their job has evolved to a point where the support they provided ahead of time could affect the outcomes of teacher leadership meetings. For example, one principal shared, “I meet with him [teacher leader] ahead of time to be sure two or three points are in there that we really need to hit hard.”

For instance, this principal felt strongly about their culture initiative and wanted to be sure that the teacher discussed it and brainstormed ways to introduce it to the students.

Another principal shared:

We [teacher leaders and I] have lots of conversations about what we need out of teacher leaders. How do we support them? And we find the resources so we can do that. Whether it be books or book studies or readings or just learning how to take data, we need to help them structure the meetings to make them useful.

This type of work was new for most principals, and many expressed their anxiety around being able to find the right research or organize the optimal meeting structures. The principals wanted to feel they were helping in the right ways, but they never had assistance to learn how to complete these new duties. Many times, the principals were afraid to ask their superintendents or central office administrators for guidance for fear of appearing to be incompetent.

Another principal expressed the importance of his job in identifying what supports the teacher leader needs. He said:

I think the biggest challenge for me with the leadership team is I feel like I have the right leaders, but I probably need to dig in a little more in the weeds as to “Okay, do they need more support that I’m not even aware of?” They may not even know they need it, or they know what they need, but just don’t really want to bring it up.”

In this case, the principals needed training and practice on how to counsel teacher leaders and how to listen with purpose so they were able to read between the lines and infer meaning from what the teacher leader was telling them. In other words, when a teacher leader was sharing frustrations about a teacher, was that teacher leader actually

requesting support from the principal on how to deal with the teacher or did the teacher leader simply need to be heard?

Again, the principals reminded me that this type of support takes time. One principal who felt overwhelmed shared, “At times, I feel like the circus is out of control.”

Another principal was more specific in explaining his desire for more time. He explained:

The next step of my position would be having more time to do a little bit more walkthroughs, a little bit more mentoring. Having the time to say, “I will go to that conference with you because that is going to be really good for both you and me to be there. And not saying, “Why don’t you go and bring it back to me, because I am being God?”

Throughout the teacher leadership journey, principals were recognizing the need to prioritize time to learn and grow alongside the teacher leaders. They no longer wanted to be the lone leader and preferred to partner with other leaders in their buildings. In order to make the shift in their roles, they needed new knowledge and skills as well as confidence that they could become a distributive leader.

Principals searched for training to assist them in gaining skills on forming reflective questions and understanding on how to prioritize their day so that teacher leaders felt valued. Principals reported that they relied primarily on their own resources to gain that new understanding. Ten of the 12 participants mentioned ways that they personally sought out research to help them adjust to their changing roles. One stated:



I am a voracious reader. When I get up in the morning, I set a time and read a book for 10 minutes and then I read articles for 10 to 20 minutes. I have to set a timer to make sure that I stop reading.

In choosing the research they depend upon, principals referenced journals from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) as well as books and articles from the educational research labs such as the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Lab (MCREL). One principal worried that his own research may not be sufficient in moving teachers and leaders to new levels. He said:

I've been fortunate enough to be a geek of a couple people like John Hattie's, Effects on Student Achievement, Todd Whitaker, and some other stuff we are doing. We all refer to articles a lot. But I'm not very good at finding research and presenting it to them and saying this should drive our work. I'm not as good as I should be at that. I don't know why.

It became obvious in the interviews that principals were aware of the research toting the best practices in education, yet they lacked the confidence to advocate these practices to their teachers. Principals must continue reading, exploring and locating the latest studies that inform best practices for teachers. They then need to be self-assured enough to share the practices with teachers and teacher leaders.

### **Mentoring.**

The final task that was new to principals in light of teacher leadership was the in-depth time they spent providing guidance to the teacher leaders. They reported feeling positive that they were influential in molding the teacher leaders into effective leadership styles; however, they said that they felt drained by the issues that arose from teacher

leaders coming to the positions with no leadership training or experience. Principals stated that the teacher leaders needed preparation if they were going to be expected to face tough issues as they coached and mentored teachers in the classroom.

As one principal was reflecting on this concern, he stated:

Teachers cannot just jump into these positions. With administration, I had a number of years preparing mentally for this and quite a bit of time in classrooms preparing. Teacher leaders are kind of thrown in there. It is left up to us [principals] to help guide them.

While all of the principals talked about spending many hours providing guidance to their teacher leaders, they referenced three main categories regarding the roles they played as they worked with their teacher leaders: mentor, mediator, and counselor. Seven principals shared the fact that they needed to provide specific advice and direction for their teacher leaders, when placing them in a mentorship role. One principal explained that all mentors needed to attend training on how to become a quality mentor. This training helped the mentor focus on how to identify a teacher's needs and then coach them toward improvement. He stated:

The instructional coach didn't understand the value of training. He didn't understand the amount of time and energy that would go into watching and discussing and trying to spend time with an individual teacher. He thought he would just pop in and visit with everybody.

The principal described how he had to work closely with the coach to help him realize that all teachers are not innately natural in their craft like the coach was. Another

principal utilized the mentor role as he guided his coach through the process of working with adult learners. He shared:

I had to help the coach understand when it is okay to joke around and make comments and when it is not. I think she really had to understand that everybody's leading a different life, and they come into this [a teacher's] class, and things that she [the coach] says may be funny to some but might be rude and condescending to others. So how do I manage personalities? I think that's been the biggest thing for her, that she hasn't meant to rub people the wrong way sometimes, but it's come out.

Those principals who have provided guidance through a mediator role had a different challenge. Four principals shared instances where they had to hold meetings between teachers and coaches when they encountered difficulty reaching consensus. One principal stated, "Eventually I have to put out fires. There are always personality issues or somebody becomes upset about something."

These principals required skills to alleviate conflict. Principals needed to understand how to remain calm, neutral and level-headed in these types of situations.

The area where 10 of the 12 coaches discussed spending ongoing time with their coaches was in the counseling realm. One remarked:

I call them therapy sessions. Because that's kind of what it was, teacher A didn't do this, teacher B didn't do this, and teacher C didn't do this. I said yeah, but they all did this better than they were [doing it in the past]. I understand they're not here, where you want them to be, but they were here, now they're in the middle. So let's keep climbing the stairs.

The principals reported how the teacher leaders were shocked that all teachers did not teach the same way or hold the same passion and dedication to the profession that they did. In the past, teachers rarely collaborated and therefore, high quality teachers believed everyone was teaching as they were. Now that the high quality teachers have become teacher leaders, they were shocked by the mediocre teacher collecting a similar salary for a fraction of the work.

Another principal talked about how he coached the model teachers when they expressed frustration that the teachers were not fully on board with all of the building's initiatives. He stated:

The model teachers are going above and beyond, but the rest of the staff is not. They are starting to understand that not everybody is doing what they're doing. And that's the biggest thing. I'm like, "You guys are teacher leaders, and I'm preaching to the choir here. It's the other 80% of the staff that we need to get."

While the principals were providing the guidance that they felt the coaches needed, they still admitted that they needed additional training and support for this new "therapist" role. One principal admitted, "I need direction on how to direct crucial conversations with teacher leaders. I want to know how to keep them focused, stay on point, and continue to move forward."

In conclusion, principals reported that their roles have changed, primarily in the areas of supporting the coaching cycle, providing supports that teacher leaders request, and offering guidance when teacher leaders need help. They shared that these new roles occupied a significant amount of their time and energy, and they conceded that their administrative training did not prepare them adequately for these new tasks. Therefore,

the principals felt they need additional training and support in order to assist their coaches in the most meaningful ways possible.

### **Finding 3: Impact Concerns about Reform**

Hall and Hord's (1987) theoretical framework states that implementers of change will experience impact concerns regarding reform. The principals in this study reported being focused on the impact of teacher leadership. They felt enthusiastic about the outcomes of teacher leadership but uneasy about the unforeseen effects of the initiative.

#### **Celebrating positive outcomes.**

The entire group of 12 principals shared numerous positive outcomes in relationship to the new leadership structure. One claimed, "When we get the teachers involved in the leadership—true leadership—we have a greater impact on our students. Another exclaimed, "This is the only initiative I've seen from the state that truly and directly impacts teacher quality."

Other principals offered specific details about the positive changes brought forth by teacher leadership. One explained:

I think we've always had leaders in the past. The difference is now we have leaders who work with individual teachers, which is not what we had in the past. We had group leaders, but not individual leaders, and I think that is the biggest educational change. As an administrator, I really couldn't help on an individual basis unless someone needed intensive assistance. Now I have someone doing that on a regular basis and it is having a huge impact on my teachers as a whole.

This principal witnessed that teachers were collaborating more often and sharing ideas with one another. Another principal shared two unexpected ways that teacher

leadership has been a positive aspect in her building. She shared that she puts teacher leaders in charge of some registration work, because they were close to the classroom teaching, but now they also had a new system view of how one change can affect a variety of areas throughout the building. She went on to share, “Another unintended impact is that whatever professional development one group of teachers has, spread like frosting to the other content areas via the instructional coach.”

Because teacher leaders can visit several classrooms within a day, they were able to share the good work from one content area with another. At the secondary level, some teachers may assume that a teaching strategy in science may not be successful in a math classroom, yet the teacher leaders were available to prove that some pedagogy is content-blind, meaning that some quality instructional strategies will work in any classroom regardless of subject matter.

Other principals shared that teacher leadership has helped bring new ideas to the building, has helped their teachers take risks and grasp new opportunities, and has helped acclimate new teachers to the building’s culture. On the topic of culture, one principal explained how kids were even feeling the ambiance inherent to a strong sense of community and collegiality among students and staff.

When asked to describe the school climate, participant responses addressed the difficulty an educational system experiences when school leaders implement change. Principals shared several stories regarding teacher resistance to the teacher leaders, hurt feelings as various colleagues assumed new positions, and inside politics as teachers sought various leadership positions within the district.

### **Facing unforeseen impacts.**

Eight of the 12 principals shared instances where teachers expressed an unwillingness to work with teacher leaders. One principal shared, “It is hard. When teachers leave the classroom, teachers that remain in the classroom never give them [teacher leaders] the same benefits [of belonging to the teacher culture].” She went on to explain, “I think when teachers leave the classroom, and aren’t a practitioner anymore, there is suddenly this feeling of, ‘Well, she is asking me to do this, but she doesn’t do it herself anymore. So does she really understand the nuances of the reality?’”

Another said, “We had a couple of people decide it was the right time to retire. “They’re like, ‘You now what? I don’t need to play this game.’ I’m like, ‘You know what? You’re right.’”

Teacher resistance to teacher leadership came as a surprise to most of the principals. They shared how they intentionally scheduled teacher meetings where the teacher leaders presented in order to put the teacher leaders in front of the teachers and acknowledge the teacher leaders’ credibility as quality educators.

Seven principals described how their teachers felt jealousy and diminished worth when referencing teacher leaders. One stated:

There’s a perception out there that teacher input is not being sought. That it’s only by the input of the teacher leaders or whoever the designated few are. The feeling is that teacher leaders have become the voice of all the others.

The principals observed that the teachers were recognizing that the teacher leadership initiative had added a new layer between principal and teacher. Principals stated that the teachers believed that rather than teacher leaders being elevating a notch,

the teachers felt they had been downgraded. They felt that principals were no longer seeking the teachers' opinions on important topics, but instead were continually consulting with the chosen few who were designated as teacher leaders.

Another principal stated, "It seems that there are a few people that feel less than because they're not identified as one of those teacher leader roles."

Principals needed to be cognizant to the fact that teacher leaders were feeling neglected and find ways to identify the interactions that caused teachers to feel this way. One principal believed the teachers' negative feelings may have been unintentionally brought on by the coaches themselves. He said, "When the coach says, 'Mr. W did this in class and Mr. W did that. You guys should go to Mr. W's class.' Well, when one or two teachers are the highlight teachers, all of a sudden the culture starts to decline."

In this case, the principal found that the instructional coaches may have caused some of the teachers' hard feelings. Therefore, he used this negative interaction as a launching point for a counseling conversation. He shared that it was the first time he considered the lack of upfront training his teacher leaders had when they began their positions. He acknowledged that the coach would not have the training nor the opportunity to consider how all interactions can affect the system as a whole.

A third principal agreed that the coach's delivery could set the tone for a school's climate. He said:

My coach's tone can be brash at times. You know how teachers are. I mean if you have anyone, let alone one of us telling them what to do. Let alone someone they view as a colleague or that they have worked with. They were once teaching side-by-



side with them, then all of a sudden she's showing up in their classroom unannounced or working with the kids.

Serving as the instructional coach's mentor, the principal can help the coach come to an understanding that teachers traditionally are not accustomed to allowing others in their classrooms asking them to justify their practices. The principal can help the coaches understand the need to focus on relationships with the teachers first and know that improvement of methods and practices will follow.

Intriguingly, 10 principals shared that they received only one applicant for the majority of the leadership jobs. The document review showed that four districts required a minimum number of high-quality applicants for their leadership positions. When I queried principals for a response on potential reasons behind the shortage of applicants, four principals shared that they thought teachers made decisions through informal channels, ultimately reaching consensus on who should apply. The principals explained that teacher status and seniority were a strong dynamic within their buildings, and those teachers who may be perceived as weaker among their colleagues would not challenge the social order by applying to coach those teachers who had years of experience and were admired by parents and fellow educators. The principals made it clear that teacher leaders needed the credibility among the staff in order for them to be invited in their classrooms to provide advice on teaching and learning.

For instance, one of the four principals shared that she was losing a coach due to the coach's advancement to the central office. She said, "I'm sure there will be a lot of chatter among the teachers. They will start thinking about who they'd like to see in her place." This

informal network could potentially keep newer and less connected teachers from applying for leadership positions.

In the second round of interviews with principals, I returned to the question of measuring impact. Perhaps it was due to the fact that it was February and 11 of the 12 were in the midst of conducting Iowa Assessments; regardless, the principals were much more focused on data to measure the effects of teacher leadership than they had been in late December. Prior to my second interview, I had the opportunity to review the Teacher Leadership applications and follow-up reports for each district. One of the requirements for the year-end reports was that teacher leaders were required to gather peer feedback on the effectiveness of their roles (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2015b). A common method that Iowa's school districts utilized for collecting data was to administer a locally determined survey to the teachers regarding their perceptions related to how the instructional coach was helping teachers improve. From the districts' year end reports, I discovered that all 12 districts in this research study administered survey data to measure impact. Only two principals portrayed a negative tone when asked about the survey data.

One said, "I am not a big fan of surveys that ask how often did you use [sic] an instructional coach? I would much rather just talk about what they are doing."

The other principal described his feelings regarding the survey in much the same way, saying:

It has to do with how many times teachers meet with coaches and things like that. It's just numerical data. I would really like to shift to some rubric-based measurement that has to do with instructional practices and visibility in professional development learning.

Yet, other principals felt positive about their survey data. One stated that digging into the survey data helped them move past the “tummy feeling of pure guesswork” toward a scientific analysis that helped them reflect on the progress they were making. Another principal stated that while he felt positive about the current data they had, he knew they needed more.

He explained, “The hardest thing will be, do we see impact on student learning and just their overall development as kids? Those things are hard to measure.”

While state leaders rely on Iowa’s state test, the Iowa Assessments, to monitor student growth, the principals in this study did not hold confidence in this measure. A few principals shared that the questions on the state test did not reflect what was being currently taught in the classrooms, even though the test creators claimed the assessment was connected to the Iowa Core Curriculum.

Principals were disillusioned about the state test due to state legislators indecisiveness on what Iowa’s state assessments should be. For the past four years, lawmakers have been considering the adoption of a new state assessment that is cost effective and aligns closely to the Iowa Core Curriculum (Pfannenstiel, 2018). In December of 2014, Iowa’s Assessment Task Force recommended that Iowa Assessments be replaced with *Smarter Balanced Assessments*, and in 2015, the State Board of Education voted unanimously to follow their recommendation and adopted this new assessment (Duffy, 2017). However in February 2018, Iowa’s Republican House of Representatives voted to bypass the Department of Education’s decision to change state testing and instead directed them to continue using Iowa Assessments (Pfannenstiel, 2018). Therefore, in the 2017-18

school year, Iowa schools utilize the Iowa Assessments to measure student growth, while the state department continues to search for quality and affordable alternatives.

Next, in the follow-up interviews, I asked principals to share any unintended outcomes that have resulted from enacting the teacher leadership program. Overwhelming responses from 10 principals indicated that at least one, but up to as many as six of the secondary teacher leaders in their districts want to return to the classroom. Principals struggled to return their highly regarded teachers to their original positions, given many of those positions had been filled. Additionally, the principals had to fill the leadership positions that the teacher leaders had once occupied.

The principals shared their belief that teacher leaders were leaving the classroom because they wanted to be with the kids. One stated:

Education is not a business model. Teachers want to teach students. If a teacher wanted money and had the desire to climb the corporate ladder, they would have chosen to do that, especially at the secondary level. We have science and math majors who can land a much higher paying job tomorrow and eventually move into middle management. Our teachers made a conscious choice to enter the education field and be with kids. At times I wonder why we try to imitate a model that these teachers rejected in the first place.

Another principal stated, “My Instructional Coach misses the direct interaction with the kids. He has some decisions to make. He is an awesome teacher.” A third principal explained, “We had some teachers interested in the position. Once we said it was going to be full time, those on the fence wanted out. They just want to teach.

As the principals shared that the teachers' primary motivation for leaving leadership positions was their sense of loss for their students, they did not appear surprised. A few principals communicated that they felt similar feelings as they made the change from teacher to principal. One principal in particular shared that he may still return to the classroom if he found the right opportunity.

According to five principals, teacher leaders were returning to the classroom at a quicker pace due to the sweeping changes that the Iowa Legislature made to teacher collective bargaining agreements. On February 16, 2017, Iowa Governor Branstad signed a bill, which strictly limited the items that teachers could negotiate (Noble, 2017). Whereas previously, teachers were allowed to negotiate items such as work conditions and evaluation procedures, the new legislation eliminated all matters from negotiation other than wages. In terms of teacher leadership, this legislation effectively wiped out all districts' Memorandums of Understanding that were written as part of the coaches' contracts. In the majority of districts, the Memorandums specified that teacher leaders could return to their jobs if they were dissatisfied with their leadership positions. One principal elaborated on this issue. He stated:

We have a couple of coaches who are thinking, "Maybe I want to go back to the classroom." Our coaches are feeling the pressure of that a little bit due to the fallout from the collective bargaining stuff. It is starting to creep its head on everything we do.

With the new legislation, several measures that offered job security for teachers were eliminated. The principals shared that teachers were worried that if they did not return to the classroom this year, they would not be allowed to return in the future. Even

worse, if the legislature pulled funding for the teacher leadership initiative, it was possible that teachers would find they have no job at all.

The principal explained one way he tried to address the teachers' concerns. "We offered early retirement so if the right people retire in certain positions, we could sway one of our coaches to realize maybe this is a good time for him to just go back to the classroom."

Principals did not want their teacher leaders leaving; however, they understood that their job satisfaction was much higher when they had the direct contact with kids. Principals also expressed feeling good about the fact that they hired teachers who were passionate about students first and their content second.

Once the high quality teachers were seen returning to the classroom, however, an unintended outcome occurred. The reputation around the position of teacher leader took a downswing, leaving principals searching for applicants who had interest in leadership. In the midst of recruiting teacher leaders, one principal reflected:

It really concerns me. It's all about the hire of a teacher leader. If my teacher leader goes back to the classroom, how much of an impact will that have on the next person who might or might not step up? They don't want to leave their kids.

Will I get somebody else to step up? Ok, I ask, "Who else would like to do this?" and I hear crickets.

Another concern, was that if principals had applicants, were they the right people for the position? One said, "I'll be honest. There's probably a couple of mentors who aren't taken very seriously because, with their colleagues, they're considered maybe not effective enough teachers."

Another principal from a small school agreed. “Sustainability for small schools is key. Some of the smaller schools—well—you get what you get. And take the people you have and put people in positions they are not ready for.”

A principal from a larger school stated that administrators cannot take more high quality people out of the classroom. She explained:

If we add an instructional coach with a science/math flair, that would pull a very good person out of the classroom. Now we’ve got two or three people that could potentially apply for that, but it would be a loss to our classrooms not having them in there. Knowing that they would serve the teachers very well and it might—it would improve and support a lot of teachers, I just struggle with taking them out full time. What kind of impact that would have on our staffing? And what kind of person are we going to be able to replace in these tight budget times? I don’t know if I could advertise for somebody with a Master’s degree and 10 years of experience because I don’t think we’re going to pay them. So they will pay this high dollar person out of TLC money and replace the general fund with a second or third year teacher and that’s just not the same.

This principal exhibited how Teacher Leadership being a separate funding source could actually have detrimental effects on the classroom, because that pot of money was able to pay for a high dollar teacher; yet, the general fund was continually searching for more money. Not only are highly educated and experienced teachers expensive, they are also are difficult to find, especially in specialized content areas such as science and math. Given the limited pool of quality teachers in Iowa, it becomes a difficult decision to move one of your best out of the classroom and further away from the students.

Other principals' concerns were connected to the requirement that 25% of teacher leaders were required to be hired from the existing pool of teachers. Eight of the 12 principals shared that the requirement of 25% of their teachers becoming leaders was not reasonable because that percentage of teachers were either not interested or not qualified to assume leadership positions. One stated, "25% of teacher leaders is a lot of bodies and not everybody is. . .not everyone wants it or is going to be good at it."

Principals believed that 25% was just an arbitrary number created by the state Department of Education, and that requirement that was not helpful to their district. Due to the requirement, some principals felt obligated to add what they considered to be superfluous positions simply to hit the required percentage. One principal added a technology position, while another added a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) position. Another principal added a special education coach, but then realized that people were not utilizing the position, so they eliminated it. One principal stated:

Honestly, I think it would be okay if they reduced the percentage of teachers from twenty-five to some lesser number. It's hard to find that many different positions, and then be able to fund it so that it's worth teachers' time to be a part of it.

Another principal wanted to remove the grant restrictions from hiring outside the district. She said:

I know a person outside our district that might want to apply for the job in our region. Because of where she lives, she drives a long way to teach right now. But she is an instructional coach in the district where she works. I know she would be great. But if we were to hire her, she couldn't be paid from TLC money because she has not been an employee here for a year.



This principal believed that stipulations outlined in the grant needed to be reviewed, because while they may have been placed there to help schools boost their leadership opportunities, in reality, they were hindering school leaders from finding the highest quality leaders for their vacant positions. As state leaders analyze the TLC implementation data, and as well as the decline of qualified secondary teachers in the classrooms, they may be inclined to consider changes to the grant guidelines.

The final principal concern related to teacher leadership was that teachers in high need and shortage areas may not be considered for teacher leadership positions. One principal stated, “The AP [Advanced Placement] Physics teacher who teaches a concurrent enrollment class may want to be a coach. That would create challenges for us definitely in the ability to hire a replacement teacher.”

At the secondary level, teachers who hold specific endorsements are in high need. A principal would not be able to find a suitable replacement, leaving that group of high quality instructors out of the pool for leadership positions. In recent years, the number of courses included in the list of shortage areas continue to grow, excluding even more teachers from leadership opportunities.

In summary, principals were pleased with the results they experienced from the teacher leadership initiative. At the same time, they were experiencing unexpected fallout from the initiative that affects their daily work. This variance of outcomes left the principals feeling positive about the impacts of teacher leadership, yet, unsure about the ripple effects related to implementation of teacher leadership.

**Finding 4: Decentralization of Professional Development**

The fourth finding in this study was not guided by the theoretical framework; however, it emerged from the data because of the numerous references and the strength of the participants' reactions to professional development becoming decentralized. Because Teacher Leadership Plans shifted professional development planning from a district-wide focus to a building focus, principals felt increased autonomy with professional development and high levels of collegiality with their building teacher leaders. While the first three findings in this study were related to specific interview questions that I designed with the intent of learning about principals' perspectives on the changes brought about by teacher leadership, this fourth finding emerged as I was conducting a close analysis of the participant interviews and teacher leadership plans. All 12 principals reported that professional development had become decentralized from the central office to the buildings in the midst of teacher leadership implementation. As I conducted an in-depth review of the districts' Teacher Leadership Plans, this finding was confirmed. The principals welcomed this change, because they felt it led to them having more input in designing the training that teachers in their building needed. Additionally, it gave principals a task that they could work on directly with their teacher leaders, providing purpose and substance to their regularly scheduled meetings. Principals also reported that the opportunity to collaborate with their teacher leaders on this kind of important work helped them build a strong professional and trusting relationship.

**Decentralizing professional development.**

All of the districts but one employed a full-time instructional coach who was fully released from teaching duties to serve in each school building. The other school employed

an instructional coach, but that person held a reduced teaching role in connection with the teacher leadership responsibilities. All 12 of the principals reported that the instructional coaches worked primarily on planning and implementing professional development. Again, all 12 shared that their role was to meet with their coaches and provide an overall vision as well as discuss what they both thought the teachers needed. Then the coach developed the details of the plan, bringing it back to the principal for final approval.

While the central office administrators maintained a level of influence regarding the overall direction of teacher training, they had less voice than they had prior to the teacher leadership initiative. The vision for professional development shifted away from the districts and to the buildings. When asked how central office staff stayed involved, one principal reported, “We have a tight and loose document. The curriculum director tells us what must be tight among the buildings, but we are then free on the loose part to add our own spin on things.” Another principal said, “We get direction overall from our curriculum professional development person, but the instructional coach and I do a lot of the meat and potatoes.”

The focus on building coaches and principals planning professional development for the teachers in their buildings led to a decentralization of professional development being offered at the district level. Principals felt positive about this change. One shared, “Each building has their own style and plan for delivering the content they need. Every staff has its own personality.

When I asked principals whether they worried about each building going a new direction with teacher training, none of them appeared to be concerned. One principal

explained, “What they [the other secondary building] are doing doesn’t apply to what we are doing. We started planning together, but they’re ahead of us now.”

Superintendents and central office administrators may become concerned as they witness the fallout of more localized professional development. They may be forced to find new ways to maintain an overarching district vision that creates some type of alignment among the various building initiatives. Another principal said, “The other school would maybe struggle with what we are doing because they’re so isolated and don’t have a lot of trust among each other.

A third principal shared:

We presented on standards-based grading at the board meeting last week and somebody asked the high school principal if they were going to do it too. He said he didn’t really think that it would make much of a difference.

The principal expressed the fact that he felt a little stung by that comment, especially given that it was in front of the school board. However, the principal admitted that he had not spent much time bringing the high school principal on board; rather, he had been occupied with his teacher leaders making sure that implementation went smoothly in his building. He voiced the need to continue ongoing conversations at the district level, in order to maintain mutual understanding of what the other buildings were doing.

Because the shift from district-wide to building-focused initiatives is relatively new, principals may not see the fragmentation that a wide spectrum of initiatives might cause for the district that maintains a system view of education. With many arrows going multiple directions, the cohesiveness of the district’s vision and mission may be at risk.

**Strengthening relationships.**

Principals shared that they hired teacher leaders who held similar views on education as well as people with whom they considered to have a close working relationship. Yet, principals found their collegiality becoming stronger as they worked toward the common ongoing task of planning professional development. With their instructional coaches, they were able to engage in meaningful work that resulted in even stronger interpersonal and trusting relationships. All 12 principals offered numerous positive comments about their coaches, explaining how they were highly knowledgeable, trustworthy, professional, and dedicated.

Eight of the principals shared how the addition of instructional coaches has added to their own job satisfaction. One shared, “I really depend on my coach.” Another explained, “My coach motivates me, gives me a boost of energy and offers suggestions for teachers who are struggling. A third elaborated, “There were times [previously speaking] when I was the only leader in the district. Now it is great to have someone to bounce ideas off of.”

The principals relied on their coaches for guidance and support similarly to how the coaches rely on them. Moreover, a strong relationship with the coaches leads principals to feel protective of their coaches. They were tuned in to the coaches’ stressors and wanted to be sure that they did not add to them.

For instance, one coach said, “The coaches give principals suggestions, but they don’t want to be the bridge between teachers and administration. They don’t want to be the complaint box.”

Another principal worried that his coach was taking on too much for the teachers. He said, “I need for her to understand that she can’t continue to take on those little things for people. She will volunteer to call home because the teachers don’t want to do it.”

Principals recognized the value in their coaches and wanted them to know how much they supported and appreciated their work. Six principals referred to various ways they celebrate their coaches. All six shared how they try to formally recognize the coaches in front of their staff and relay all of the good work that the coaches are doing. One principal shared how she tried to intentionally plan for ways to show her coach appreciation. For example, she told the coach, “Let’s get out of the building for a few minutes. Let’s go fellowship somewhere else and we can talk show for a few minutes to review, but then let’s just enjoy each other’s company and have a quick celebration.” This type of gesture may appear small, but it can go a long way in reminding coaches how much the principals need them.

In summary, principals reported satisfaction that professional development responsibilities have shifted from central office to the building level. The additional duties of planning and implementing professional development with their coaches has provided principals with a meaningful purpose for meeting with their coaches and has resulted in the two forming a cohesive bond through the important work of training teachers.

Hall and Hord’s (1987) theoretical framework offered facilitators of change (central office administrators) potential ideas on how to support implementers of change (principals) throughout the reform process. Many of the interview questions in this study were designed to identify whether central office administrator support was helpful to the principals as they implemented the teacher leadership initiative. The fifth general theme

from the interviews and document review addressed central office administrator support in relation to the second research question: *How do principals perceive the level of support they received from central office administrators as they responded to the significant change in leadership structure brought forth by the teacher leadership initiative?* The finding, along with supporting quotations, is explained below.

### **Finding 5: Central Office Administrators Support Principals**

Because principals perceived that the teacher leadership initiative lacked adequate funding and guidance for principal support, central office administrators were creating their own local support structures aligned with principals' needs. However, principals questioned whether their district's implementation models and tools met best practices.

The teacher leadership initiative provided a detailed framework for teacher leaders and required each district to explain what their duties and responsibilities would be. However, support for the principals, who were expected to work alongside the teacher leaders, was not addressed in the initiative, nor was funding attached to help the principals learn their new roles.

#### **Locating resources.**

Because each district created their own support plans, principals shared that they worried whether the principal at the school next door, who was accessing different training and supports, was better equipped to implement this leadership change. For instance, all 12 principals utilized some type of coaching model that was recommended by central office administration who told the principals that a research-based model would be helpful as they worked toward full implementation. Some principals utilized literature on coaching put forth by Diane Sweeney, others cited Jim Knight, and still others mentioned works by

Steven Barclay. One principal attended a few Jim Knight trainings and realized that Knight's hands-off approach was not working well with her staff. She said:

Jim Knight says that you don't push yourself on them. You [should] just be approachable, be amendable and they will come. Well. . .not so much. We became more directive and said that this is what was going to happen. We told them that they must schedule a time and the coach would follow up if she hadn't heard from [them] yet.

While this principal felt the freedom to move among various models, pulling the ideas that were most applicable to her staff and school, other principals fully committed to just one model and made sure that everyone was trained together. One principal shared, "We all are working with the Diane Sweeney model. Principals and coaches train in the model together.

The fact that one principal utilized the best practice from several models, while another held true to one model in favor of implementation fidelity, left both principals wondering which method was best in helping them reach their goals. A principal who had been utilizing the Diane Sweeney model since the inception of teacher leadership began to question himself. He said, "My coaches are talking about the coaching model. They are thinking they may really like another type of coaching. They are asking, 'Can we look at that?'" These types of comments left the principal feeling uniformed and confused. He told me he really did not know if it was best to stay loyal to one model or allow his coaches the freedom to explore. He was left to wonder whether to make a definitive decision or to seek guidance on the question. His problem was that he was not sure whom to ask.



In order to address these types of questions, superintendents in five districts worked with superintendents in their areas to create consortiums for principals to network and share concerns. Principals shared they met frequently to discuss the positives and negatives of their implementation processes with other principals in their area. As principals networked with one another and shared their implementation processes, some admitted that they experienced self-doubt regarding the models they were utilizing in their districts. They returned home and felt confused, struggling with what changes to recommend to their central office administrators in their quest for continuous improvement.

All of the principals felt that the Department of Education should suggest resources and offer support materials for superintendents to use in helping the principals. Yet, they acknowledged the enormity of that task. One said, "There's no way our Department of Education can support 300 districts the way other teacher leadership programs around the nation are supported."

A couple of other principals mentioned the Area Education Agencies (AEAs) could help, but they explained the distance they would have to travel for a meeting and did not want to spend hours driving when they felt time was better spent in their building. One principal shared how another AEA was much closer to his district; however, it was not the agency assigned to them. He explained that if he were allowed to become a part of the learning groups at the alternative AEA that was closer to his district, he would take advantage of more trainings from the AEA.

One of the principals was familiar with the tools available in a federal teacher leadership program. For instance, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)

awards a TAP (The System for Teacher and Student Advancement) grant, which provided an abundance of tools that assisted principals in implementation of teacher leadership. While this principal did not have the federal grant in his school, he shared how his school was using the tools, modifying them for their needs as they created support structures for his teacher leaders. He said, “We kind of follow the TAP Model. We still use their framework, but we kind of modified the observations; we modified how we do them to make it fit what we want.”

He later stated, “Our superintendent says we are not really TAP anymore, but 90% of it is still the same.” Because there are no stipulations for models or tools within the teacher leadership initiative, principals feared that support may be lacking in some districts.

One principal said:

My biggest concern is that I don’t think a lot of districts are buying into something. I think they kind of put a ribbon on what they were already doing or tweaked it a little bit and made it work. I don’t know if they have any support.

This principal went on to tell me that he is no longer a fan of local control. He explained that five years ago he would not have felt that way; however, after implementing teacher leadership utilizing detailed manuals, rubrics, and processes and then watching other districts appear to be lost, he became a strong advocate for requiring standardized implementation. He believed that the TLC Legislation should require specific tools and provide detailed guidelines regarding implementation. Because he saw other school districts implementing TLC in so many different ways, he thought the state department should specify detailed actions on what they expected throughout implementation.

A principal from another district admitted to being lost. He explained, “We didn’t utilize help enough in the past. We agreed that we needed support, because we felt that we were floundering. The superintendent listened to my concerns and connected me with help.”

### **Experiencing internal support.**

In terms of principal support, superintendents varied significantly in regard to their level of involvement with principals as they implemented teacher leadership. The varying levels of superintendent involvement could be attributed to the size of school. One principal from a smaller school shared that his superintendent was heavily involved in decision making, while a principal from a larger school shared that the superintendent preferred a more laissez-faire approach wherein he entrusted his central office directors to keep him informed. Either way, both principals were receiving help from central office administration.

While none of the superintendents addressed teacher leadership in the principal’s evaluation, ten superintendents utilized regular conversations to guide their principals through the teacher leadership process. At times, the principals felt the assistance was mutual and they were helping the superintendents as much as the superintendents were helping them. For instance, in one school the teacher leaders perceived that the superintendent was not involved in the teacher leadership initiative. The teacher leaders were expecting the superintendent to utilize what Bolman and Deal (2014) refer to as the symbolic framework of leadership. Within this framework, the leader plunges into the work and becomes a part of the team, leading by example and offering credence to the work (Bolman, 2014). When this was not occurring, the principal described a difficult

situation when he had to ask the superintendent to become more involved in the teacher leadership work. He said:

Our superintendent was not at the meetings. The teacher leaders said, “If we’re not going to get supported by our superintendent then why do we continue to do this work? It was an off-the-cuff comment, but it was a real one. So the toughest part about that, for me, was after those meetings, I had to go back to the superintendent and tell him that if he didn’t start coming to the meetings, he would lose some really good people. I had to explain that the teacher leaders are changing the game in this district and I am not sure he was understanding that.

This principal, among others, explained that superintendent support did not always need to be underscored with action; rather, in many cases, it was simply the superintendent’s presence in meetings that was needed. Principals also agreed that support in the first few years was most critical, because that was when teacher leaders and principals are learning the processes that will carry them throughout the entire implementation process. Thus, it would be important for the superintendents to identify their role in the teacher leadership and to recognize the importance of their presence in helping principals help teacher leaders feel supported in their new roles.

### **Connecting principals to external support systems.**

The most helpful way that principals perceived superintendent support was their ability to connect the principals to outside resources to address their various implementation concerns. Six principals referred to Area Education Agencies (AEAs) when they described their training. Three other principals chose to organize informal consortium training among schools in their area. One principal explained:

We tried to do a lot without the AEA, because we [principals and teacher leaders] just wanted time to talk to one another. We didn't want to worry about training and credit. We just needed to talk and use the time as we think it is needed.

Another principal explained that AEA does not hold the capacity to assist all of their clientele. He explained:

Some of them (AEAs) have a hundred districts, some have seventy-five. They have fifteen people to support seventy-five districts. What am I supposed to do with that? They are doing the best they can, but I don't know at what level they're going to be able to support everybody. Then it comes down to politics [regarding which districts receive the bulk of AEA support staff's time and assistance].

Whether it is a reality or simply a principal's perception of the Area Education Agencies' deficiencies, some principals asked their superintendents to support other options. Three other principals discussed their appreciation that their superintendent connected them to programs such as the New York Leadership Academy and the School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) principal cohort. Both programs provided training and mentors for principals, which they found to be extremely valuable.

In reference to the New York Leadership Academy, one principal stated, "I want to know what other people are doing, like how are other people using their system, or what framework or what different things are they using? I think that's where I get the most learning." Another principal lauded the value of the SAI program, which provides meetings and an individual mentor. He said, "My mentor has been invaluable to me. It is wonderful to have somebody to meet with on a regular basis." These two outside services cost the

districts significant amounts of money; yet, the principals believe the value it brought in helping them implement teacher leadership was worth the cost.

Even though principals had access to a wide variety of instructional opportunities, including area consortiums, AEA training and learning academies, seven of the principals still felt they could use more support. When asked about the implementation process, one principal stated, “To be honest with you, it has been a little difficult.

Another principal specified what she needed. She said, “We principals are not getting training anymore to be good leaders of adult learning. It doesn’t come naturally.”

Two other principals advocated for more administrative professional development among their administrative team of central office staff and building-wide administrators. One said, “Our school admin team needs professional development as a group. Maybe we need an instructional manager coach for the principals.”

While many options for training exist, principals still felt they needed more help. In reference to their superintendent support, all of the principals explained that their bosses would provide them the support they needed for training and resources; however, five explained that their superintendents did not become involved in the day-to-day details of teacher leadership. One said, “He is a hands-off superintendent. He is not really the micro-managing type. He is more of a money guy.”

When principals viewed their superintendents’ expertise in the financial realm as opposed to the instructional realm, they reported being less likely to approach them for support with teacher leadership. One principal stated:

The topic of teacher leadership might come up with the superintendent, depending on what time of year it is. If we are in the middle of state reporting, like we were last

week, it might come up, but . . . deadlines don't change and we have to get a lot of stuff done.

The principals shared how they know teacher leadership must be a priority for administrators, but in reality, the daily obligations can push the initiative down the priority ladder. As they were reflecting, many principals shared that they planned to add aspects of teacher leadership to their weekly goals in hopes of maintaining the initiative at the forefront of their work.

In summary, principals reported that they were pleased with the assistance they receive from central office administration. They explained one concern was that there was so much freedom in choosing models and tools for implementation, that they felt confusion as they worked to identify the most effective approach. Additionally, principals perceived that superintendents' support primarily came from connecting principals to outside training and mentorships. Principals stated their desire to see more internal assistance in the form of administrative learning teams and increased superintendent presence in teacher leadership meetings.

### **Document Review**

A review of the 12 Teacher Leadership Plans and the follow-up reports was conducted for each school that had a principal participate in this study. Each school district in Iowa was required to write a teacher leadership plan as well as to file annual progress reports related to the teacher leadership initiative. A close review of these plans and reports was conducted for each school that had a principal participate in this study. Findings from this review confirmed many aspects the principals shared throughout the interviews. For instance, the district's TLC Plans listed the teacher leadership positions that

were created, such as instructional coaches, model teachers, mentors and curriculum leaders. The plans also specified the types of training that teacher leaders would receive, such as guidance on coaching teachers, as well as laid out plans for how the district would evaluate progress. All of the district's plans explained that surveys and Iowa Assessment data would be two measures that administrators would analyze to determine the effects of teacher leadership.

Searching specifically for references to the principal within the TLC plans and follow-up reports, I found that principals were mentioned in the plans when authors described the ways that teacher leaders would receive support. For instance, several of the reports explained how the principals had set structures that allowed for increased communication. Other reports shared survey data where teacher leaders reported the appreciation of the support they received from the principals. However none of the plans or the reports made any mention of how the principals would be supported either by central office administrators or by outside agencies.

Therefore, central office administrators, especially the superintendents, were left to determine the types of assistance that principals would need. While the degree of involvement from superintendents varied, principals expressed their appreciation for the times when superintendents provided them direction. That support varied from identifying effective models and tools, to supporting principals who were assisting teacher leaders in professional development opportunities; furthermore, it extended to times when superintendents took the initiative to connect principals to outside agencies that could provide the additional mentorship opportunities that principals felt they needed.



### **Disconfirming Evidence**

Scholars remind us that it is human nature for a researcher to select and analyze data that confirms one's preconceived notions, while neglecting to consider findings that are not supportive of the overall hypotheses (Petticrew, 2006). However, researchers are able to reach a more deep and meaningful understanding of a phenomenon, as well as add validity to their study when they also seek information that do not fit the patterns of the emerging themes (Patton, 1990).

While 10 of the 12 principals shared that they had teacher leaders wanting to return to teaching, two of the principals shared a different concern. They expressed apprehension that there was not fluidity with teacher leaders moving in and out of leadership positions, thus, eliminating leadership opportunities for new employees. These principals shared their concerns that if the intent of the legislation was to open avenues for teachers to experience leadership, it was not happening in their schools due to lack of movement once a teacher was placed in a leadership position.

This finding leaves one to wonder why the majority of schools have several teacher leaders requesting a return to the classroom, while two of the schools experience no movement at all. It is possible that the job duties, climate or principal support at these two schools may be different. Rather it could simply be that the teacher leaders in these two schools have long held aspirations to lead and are therefore experiencing job satisfaction. Still another possibility could be that the classroom assignment they are wanting is not available and they do not feel comfortable working with a grade level they were not accustomed to teaching. Secondary teachers experience more difficulty than elementary

teachers in moving back to the classroom due to the limitation of their certifications to teach only specific content that the license allows.

This disconfirming evidence would be a topic worth studying further. The findings from a case study of the two schools where teacher leaders were not moving back to the classroom would be interesting for state leaders to understand the elements of their programs, which may be different from the schools where teachers are returning to the classrooms.

### **Summary**

This chapter reported the research findings and identified the emergent themes from 24 qualitative interviews with 12 secondary school principals. While all 12 principals believed that teacher leadership has positively transformed education in their districts, they also expressed concerns they are feeling as they work to implement Iowa's teacher leadership initiative. This study documented the spectrum of concerns that principals were experiencing and categorized them into concerns regarding themselves, their tasks, and the impacts they felt the initiative was having on student learning. Additionally, the study found that central office administrators are supporting principals by offering time, resources, and assistance in connecting principals to outside support systems.

Chapter 5 reviews the theoretical significance of the findings. The chapter then continues the discussion of the findings within the context of the two research questions. It then identifies the implications of the findings for principals, central office administrators and leaders at the Department of Education. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' perceptions of their positions in light of the teacher leadership initiative in Iowa, as well as to examine how principals perceived support from central office administrators as they worked toward implementation of teacher leadership within their schools. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 12 secondary principals from Iowa schools were conducted on two separate occasions over a period of two months. Findings throughout the study showed that principals felt positive about teacher leadership when they saw changes within their learning culture, such as when learning teams were holding reflective conversations about a lesson. Yet, other times, principals experienced concerns with the TLC initiative, especially when they felt they had lost responsibilities where they thought they had been making a strong contribution to the learning culture. This chapter will focus on the theoretical implications of this research regarding the principal's role throughout the teacher leadership implementation process, the implications for the field with this research, limitations, and recommendations for further study.

### **Discussion and Theoretical Implications**

#### **Leadership Models**

This study found that as teacher leadership programs were implemented, principals were required to change their views of what leadership had been and adapt to a new leadership style where they shared decisions and solved problems alongside teacher leaders. The new view of leadership was a goal of the state leaders as they created the leadership opportunities for teachers (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2013) in essence, shifting from a traditional model toward a distributive model of leadership. Prior

to the 2013 legislation that allocated funds for teacher leaders, many Iowa schools operated under the traditional leadership structure where the goals and aims of the school were influenced by one lone individual, typically the school principal (Göksoy, 2015). In 2018, five years after the initial legislation, all Iowa schools are operating within the teacher leadership initiative, which is intended to create a distributive leadership structure, where leadership is spread among both people and situations (Spillane et al., 2001).

This study found that the structure provided within Iowa's Teacher Leadership Compensation Grant (TLC) provided a framework for consistency, which provided some commonalities among schools, such as having teacher leaders focus on professional development and instructional coaching. However, TLC also provided for local district flexibility, which resulted in principals questioning which teacher leader roles and duties would produce the most effective results. This finding supports the research that states that while distributive leadership provides positive results (May & Supovitz, 2011), the teacher leadership role can be ambiguous and there is no consistent definition regarding what the teacher leader is or does (Quinn, 2002).

### **Teacher Leadership: National Perspective**

Principals in this study acknowledged a change in their roles from isolation to collaboration. Principals shared that while they were no longer the one standing alone in front of every professional development session, they were replacing that responsibility with new responsibilities. These duties included the daily management and discipline duties, but now principals were also creating structures that allowed time for teacher leaders to work with teachers, guiding and supporting teacher leaders in their work, and

learning alongside their coach as they implemented the coaching cycles with teachers. Several principals role-played being a teacher for the coaches, allowing themselves to undergo a complete coaching cycle with the teacher leader. In other words, the coaches practiced their questioning techniques with the principals before they tried them with the teachers. These examples provide support for the claim that principals' new mission is to offer resources and support to the teacher leader so they are able to help teachers improve classroom instruction. Another trend that researchers found as they studied teacher leadership across the nation was that teacher leadership programs had the potential to transform instructional practices that traditional leadership practices had been unable to change (Margolis & Deuel, 2009), such as teachers taking ownership of writing curriculum and sharing instructional practice.

Data from this study showed the principals' enthusiasm around the results they are witnessing in terms of quality learning conversations among staff members. They described how the culture of their building has shifted to an ambiance wherein teachers are extending classroom invitations to one another or conveying the impacts of new resources they are reading. Many principals explained how a team of teachers would rally around a goal and communicate student data, and then listen to the teacher who had the highest student scores describe the methods he or she used to teach the concepts. Other principals added that this new learning atmosphere led to peer pressure toward those who were not yet comfortable in sharing their practice. They explained how the teacher leaders worked more extensively with this group of teachers and in practicing new methods.. These examples support the claim that distributed leadership is changing the teaching and

learning process. In fact, one principal stated that teacher leadership has produced a stronger impact than any other educational initiative he has experienced in the past.

However, the principals in this study reported that their staff had not yet reached the pinnacle of teacher leadership within their schools, where all teachers experience positive reactions to the leadership changes. Rather, some teachers who remained in the classroom struggled with the new teacher leader roles and how leaders represented a type of middle management. Suddenly, teachers were wondering if the teacher leaders had advanced upward in the social hierarchy or if the teachers who were not leaders had now lost status. This finding suggests that in the midst of school reform, players are determining where they fit within the new structure, and some teachers may feel they have lost professional stature. All staff should feel recognized and valued. Because the Distributive Leadership Model contributes to all teachers feeling a sense of ownership and self-efficacy within their workplace (Wilhelm, 2013), it becomes important for the principal to recognize and address the teachers who may feel disenfranchised by the teacher leadership model.

### **Teacher Leadership: Iowa Perspective**

As I interviewed principals and conducted a document review of their teacher leadership plans and follow up reports, I found that all of the schools within this study had followed the state framework as they established their teacher leadership initiatives. The state framework for the teacher leadership initiative was grounded in theory. In 2011, Iowa's Governor Terry Branstad delegated Iowa Director of Education, Jason Glass to lead the vision to create a comprehensive teacher leadership compensation initiative in Iowa. (Wise, 2013). Glass appointed Ryan Wise to research and organize the aspects of the

initiative. Wise delved into the research on reform, teacher career development and differentiated teacher leadership roles as he molded a teacher leadership plan that fit Branstad's vision (Wise, 2013). Eventually, this plan evolved into Iowa's Teacher Leadership Compensation Initiative that is now implemented in every school district in Iowa. Chapter Two of this study outlines Iowa's comprehensive plan for every school district in the state to implement a teacher leadership initiative that contains specific criteria consistent among all schools (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2013).

This dissertation revealed how elements within the state-determined framework have unintentionally created obstacles for principals as they implemented the initiative. For instance, principals expressed concern with the arbitrary percentage of their staff that they are required to promote to teacher leadership. State leaders determined that 25% of one's staff should be promoted to teacher leadership positions because they believed that percentage would lead to an elevation of the entire teaching profession (Wise, 2017). In a rush to meet the 25% requirement, principals shifted teachers from their classrooms to new leadership positions in just one year. New teachers were hired and suddenly a different hierarchy transpired. Principals shared that teachers who had worked next door to one another for several years were separated, at times one of them moving to an office with a new nameplate and title. Principals reported that this rapid movement of so many positions all at one time caused a great deal of discomfort among the staff, thus, causing tensions within the school culture.

This study added to the research on teacher leadership by identifying an additional factor within Iowa's teacher leadership guidelines that has proven to be a barrier: the state leaders' assumption that teacher leadership positions are a reward for professional growth

and effective teaching (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2013). Principals in this study reported that several of their teacher leaders were not interested in “moving up” through the ranks of management. The principals shared that they assumed teacher leaders were taking the leadership positions in order to prepare for the next step of dean, assistant principals or even the principal. However, several teacher leaders shared with the principals that this assumption was not accurate. Many teacher leaders envisioned the leadership positions to be a new aspect of education that may enhance their own practice; however, many did not hold aspirations of becoming an administrator. Teacher leaders may find themselves in a precarious position if the TLC funding is eliminated and they want to continue within leadership roles. Without TLC, it will be interesting to learn if teacher leaders return to the classroom or pursue degrees in educational leadership in order to continue within a leadership role.

One principal pointed out to me that all of his secondary teachers have majors in content areas that include math, English, science, and history. Their minors were education, but their majors meant they were certified for other, more lucrative, occupations, all of which have a corporate ladder structure. For instance, an English major could become an editor, a journalist or a paralegal; to name a few occupations, while a math major could become an actuary, an accountant or a banker. Each of these professions incorporate a hierarchy structure where employees begin at an entry level position and work their way up in salary and credibility. However, when teachers chose their careers they understood their desire to spend their days with children. As these teachers moved to leadership opportunities, they realized they had lost their connection with students, and therefore, several teacher leaders asked to return to their previous teaching positions. Barth (2013)



supported this finding, asserting that teacher leadership is not a business model and the aspects of each model do not even closely compare.

### **Advantages of Teacher Leadership to School Systems and Reform**

This research reaffirms that teacher leadership produces several advantages for school systems, students, teachers and principals.. Findings from this study showed that principals feel optimistic about the potential that teacher leaders hold for improving teacher instruction and are enthusiastic about the impacts these improvements can have on student learning. For instance, principals in this study found that teacher leaders who were passionate about curriculum were highly skilled in working with teachers. This finding supports the research that claims content teacher leaders have the strongest knowledge base and understand the best methods to deliver it (Neumerski, 2013).

Danielson (2007) has stated that the most successful schools include teachers, supported by their principals, who take initiative in the teaching and learning process. While this dissertation shows that the principals' enthusiasm for teacher leadership has not yet translated into increased test scores for their students, it has increased the collective capacity of the school. Fullan (2011) asserts that capacity should be the true measure of success. Fullan (2011) believes that evaluators of school reform need to replace the attitude of focusing on standards, assessments, rewards and punishments, to focusing on respecting and strengthening the teaching profession.

While principals shared several examples of collaborative relationships among their staff, several principals were unsure whether teachers perceived the advancement opportunities to be a benefit. The research from Chapter Two states that teachers benefit from teacher leadership because the staff is more collaborative (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd,

2012) and teacher leaders are provided with new opportunities for advancement (Danielson, 2007). The findings in this research pose the question of whether teachers hold the desire to move to leadership, because it comes at the cost of removing them from the students.

Principals in this study shared their appreciation for teacher leaders who assume curriculum and professional duties previously reserved for the principal. This finding supports the research that teacher leaders can alleviate principal workloads (Barth, 2001a). However, this study found that as principals release their responsibilities to teacher leaders, they experience a spectrum of emotions ranging from relief to regret. They are relieved that they do not have to spend an hour with a teacher who wants to reflect on her lesson, because they do not have that time in their day; yet, they regret that they participate less in instructional duties. Still, principals did not feel that their workload overall was reduced, given the new responsibilities inherent within the TLC reform. Thus at times principals felt the coaches were enacting the significant work, while the principals were conducting less engaging work. This change could affect principal morale over time.

### **Challenges of Teacher Leadership to School Systems and Reform**

Principals reported how their teacher leaders experienced some backlash from their peers as they assumed leadership roles. Some principals reported that their teacher leaders were accused of moving to the “Dark Side,” while other principals described how resistant teachers were not open to advice or coaching. As teacher leadership is implemented throughout schools, it is important for principals to recognize the impact that the reform is having on school culture. Goodwin (2013) states that co-workers insecurities

or jealousies could negatively influence the passion and enthusiasm of a teacher leader, which is a finding that was supported in this study.

Principals shared that they spent a great deal of time coaching the teacher leaders through the tough times as teacher leaders faced opposition to the initiative, a finding which supports the research that states principals who work closely with teacher leaders result in teacher leaders becoming true change agents for their schools (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011).

At the same time, principals themselves require guidance and support throughout the teacher leadership initiative. Findings from this study show that all principals experienced a spectrum of concerns throughout implementation, yet few people, other than central office administrators were interested in how the principals were feeling. Principals' concerns included isolation, confusion, and anxiety, among others. Researchers who conducted evaluation reports on teacher leadership conducted interviews and focus groups with superintendents, teachers, teacher leaders, AEA members and Department of Education leaders, yet they did not interview the principals (Citkowicz et al., 2017).

Additionally, the principals reported that most often their superintendents focused on how the teacher leaders were adjusting in their new roles, forgetting that that principals' roles had changed as well. This finding signifies that the role of central office administration is crucial as they support and guide principals through the implementation process. Researchers state that if principals are feeling insecurities and a need for control, they will not be able to utilize teacher leaders effectively (Barth, 2001a). Thus, central office administrators should continue to support teacher leaders as well as the principals.

### **Teacher Leadership Roles Within the Secondary School**

This study found that principals report teacher leaders are performing duties such as coaching and mentoring teachers, facilitating curriculum development and leading professional development, which coincide with the research regarding the expectations for teacher leaders' work (Devine & Alger, 2011). In this dissertation, principals admitted that there were times they have needed a substitute teacher for the day and have asked a teacher leader to fill in, or perhaps they needed help on the master schedule, and appreciated a second view point; however, principals stated that their intentions were to keep teacher leaders focused on improving instruction. This finding is consistent with that of researchers who warn that if teacher leaders and principals do not communicate about the clarity of the teacher leadership roles, administrators may utilize teachers in non-instructional ways such as working on the budget or completing paperwork (Gigante & Firestone, 2008). Thus, it is important for principals to be conscious of the times they ask teacher leaders to serve in roles that are not in the realms of leadership or instruction.

Principals in this study struggled with whether teachers work with a teacher leader should be voluntary or mandatory. While most of the principals began implementation by allowing teachers to volunteer to work with a coach, they soon learned that the resisters would not ever take advantage of coaching unless principals mandated the practice. Thus, principals would be better served to mandate coaching from the beginning to be sure all teachers have opportunities for professional growth. By beginning a reform in a voluntary structure and changing the guidelines after implementation, teachers may feel misled or resentful.

Principals stated that when instructional coaching was voluntary, a division existed among the staff. Those teachers who chose to work with a coach were perceived by other teachers to be needy or opportunistic, while those who chose not to work with the coach, were perceived by the other teachers to be resistant and uncooperative. When everyone was required to work with teacher leaders, principals reported that participation in coaching cycles became the work that all teachers do, and the division among teachers has been reduced. Thus, by expecting all teachers to participate in school reforms, they all undergo similar experiences and are not divided by labels such as adopters and resisters. Researchers report that educators have disagreed on whether teachers' work with teacher leaders should be voluntary or mandatory (Stoelinga, 2010); yet, this study has found that principals feel that teachers' work with a teacher leader should be required because of the positive results they have witnessed in school culture.

### **Principal Roles Within the Secondary School**

Principals reported that special education is taking more time than previously experienced, especially in the area of mental health. They communicated that they have more students with intensified needs and fewer places to send the students for help. Additionally, the principals shared that special education laws are continually changing, making it difficult for the principals to manage all of the new requirements. A few other principals shared that the bulk of their student discipline now relates to social media issues. Frequently, principals find themselves visiting with students and parents about erotic messaging and cyber bullying, while teacher leaders are discussing productive group work and differentiated instruction with the teachers. Thus, the principal role has expanded, whereas the teacher leaders are focused primarily on instruction. As noted in

Chapter Two, principals have found their jobs to be overwhelming (Nappi, 2014), and do not feel prepared for the long list of duties they are expected to complete (Hess & Kelly, 2007). This research added to the body of knowledge by finding that in recent years, principals have encountered additional responsibilities that consume their time, and that while one might think that moving coaching duties to teacher leaders might save principal time, principals in this study have instead re-allocated their time to creating structures and providing support for teacher leaders to successfully work with teachers.

### **Teacher Leader and Building Principal Collaboration**

This study adds to the research by emphasizing the importance for principals to celebrate and recognize their teacher leaders. The principals in this study shared methods of acknowledging the work their teacher leaders do, which included taking them off site for coffee and complimenting their work to other staff members. The findings within this study support research showing that a strong level of relational trust among educators increases the likelihood that reform initiatives will spread throughout the school (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). This is due to the finding that trust alleviates the anxieties of risk associated with the change (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Principals in this study held regularly scheduled meetings with the teacher leaders focused on allowing the teacher leaders to reflect on their past work, as well as to provide direction for upcoming professional development opportunities. Thus they were attempting to build trust in a new direction, positively influencing teacher leaders to in turn impact the classroom teachers and their classroom instruction.

Participants in this study attributed the need to defend their positions less from a lens of control but more from a feeling of loss. They reported that they missed the

instructional work they had been doing and were working to find other ways to remain involved, which included working alongside the teacher leader and learning about best practices together. This new work, prompted principals to prioritize time each week to focus on visiting classrooms and hold reflective conversations with teachers. When discussing the relationship between the teacher leaders and the principal, researchers caution that there may be times that principals shun the teacher leadership concept and feel the need to protect their own turf (Barth, 2001a). This turf-protection did not surface as a finding from this study, but principals did miss working more directly with their teachers.

### **Principal Preparation for New Leadership Roles**

Along with new responsibilities in special education and discipline, principals shared that they have assumed new duties connected to teacher leadership. Principals stated that they are being asked to serve as coach, mentor and counselor to teacher leaders, and many times principals do not feel adequately prepared to enact these new roles. Some researchers have stated that many principal preparation programs are not high quality (Levine, 2005), or emphasize management skills rather than instructional knowledge (Aarons, 2010a); therefore principals could enter the profession unprepared. Needing new skills, the principals in this study sought out alternative avenues for their own professional development and support. As stated in Chapter Two, organizations in the state such as SAI, AEAs, and NYLA have all offered principal supports, and at least one participant in this study mentioned that he has utilized each of these supports as he has worked through the implementation process. However, principals shared that the cost to access these support systems continues to rise; therefore, some principals organized informal consortium

groups for additional support. Within these groups, area principals meet throughout the year to share ideas and brainstorm solutions to issues that arise throughout teacher leadership implementation. Principals in this study report that this networking opportunity reduced their feelings of isolation and provided them with a forum to ask questions to other principals and learn from their experiences. This finding supports the research that found those principals who participated in peer coaching felt more prepared to lead compared to those who did not participate in peer coaching (Holacka, 2011).

### **Time Constraints Influence Changes in Practice**

The principals in this study supported previous research that explained how principals want to be involved in instructional leadership but have difficulty pulling themselves away from management duties. Maxwell (2014) found in a study following 100 principals that only 13% of the principals' time was focused on instruction. Similarly, this study found that principals feel overwhelmed by management concerns and instructional duties often are pushed down the priority list. Given the new responsibilities brought forth in a principal's work supporting teacher leaders, principals in this study shared that they feel busier than they ever have been before. This finding supports Manna's (2015) claim that teacher leadership has not transformed the principal's job as much as it has expanded it and perhaps principals are more overloaded with work than they had been within the traditional leadership structure.

A significant finding of previous research, as outlined in Chapter Two, was supported by the findings in this study, related to the advantages of principals coaching teachers as opposed to principals evaluating teachers, was supported by the findings in this study. The research depicts the futility of the traditional evaluation process (Marshall,



2013). In fact, research shows that when principals do only classroom observations, student achievement may fall (Sparks, 2016); yet when school leaders spent time coaching teachers, students experienced gains in achievement (Sparks, 2016). Thus working with teachers through a coaching process is where principals will have the highest impact on student learning.

During the current teacher evaluation process in most of the districts in this study the principal watches a teacher conduct a 45-minute lesson and records how the teacher performed on a set of specific criteria identified within Iowa's eight teaching standards. The principal records whether the teacher met sufficient criteria to determine that the teacher passed each standard. The principal then records observational data and checks the box to show "met" or "unmet" beside each standard. The principal then meets with the teacher and shares the collected data. In most schools this process happens once or twice every three years.

During instructional coaching, on the other hand, teacher leaders work with individual teachers on a daily basis, helping them to identify goals, track data, and refine their instruction. Throughout this process, the teacher leaders are holding coaching conversations with the teachers, asking them to reflect on their practice and offering them support through suggestions, modeling, or providing additional resources,

As principals in this study watched the teacher leaders working directly with teachers on a daily basis, it did not take them long to realize that conducting an observation once or twice a year for 45 minutes and offering general feedback on student engagement and lesson planning was not making an impact for those teachers. Rather, the ongoing coaching conversations were where the principals saw significant changes in teacher

practice occurring. Therefore, the findings again show that principals' feedback may need to shift from a formal evaluative structure to a coaching model in order to affect teachers' professional growth.

### **Central Office Administrators' Role in Advancing Reform**

Findings in this study show that principals welcomed assistance from their teacher leaders. In many districts, the teacher leadership initiative funded additional central office staff in the form of teacher leader coordinators, technology directors, or curriculum facilitators and these positions offered principals another avenue to seek the guidance support they desired. The findings in this study showed that principals desired encouragement, communication and help in locating professional development resources, particularly connection to models and tools regarding instructional coaching. The study provides support for the research that states that principals need to feel supported by central office administration, including the superintendent and directors, in order for implementation to occur (Grubb & Flessa, 2006).

Principals in this study found that when superintendents and directors were not visible and involved, the teacher leaders lost momentum and became resentful. They found that when central office administrators were unable to offer sufficient support and guidance to their principals, the central office administrators would identify external avenues for help, including SAI, AEA and New York Leadership Academy. All three of these groups are referred to in Chapter Two as organizations that offer mentoring and resources for principals. While superintendents were found to be helpful to principals, superintendents were also adept at connecting principals with supplemental resources if

needed. This finding supports the research claim that explains weak guidance from central office personnel can undermine a school's reform efforts (Corcoran et al., 2001).

### **Implications for Hall's Stages of Concern Model**

Hall and Hord's (1987) theory of change was deemed most appropriate for this study because the theory monitors how implementers of a reform experience change. This theory is found within Hall and Hord's (1987) Concerns-based Approach framework. The theory states that change is a process rather than an event. Therefore, as a new innovation is introduced, implementers of change (in this case, principals) move along an Implementation Bridge, experiencing several Stages of Concern, shifting forward and backward, but eventually making forward progress toward full implementation. As central office administrators work with the implementers to facilitate change, the focus should be on the individual rather than on something concrete. In other words, change relies on a person altering their behavior; therefore, the facilitator of change (central office administrators) should design interventions that directly relate to the individual's needs rather than rely on a particular model or tool (Hord et al., 1987).

This study supported Hall's theoretical work on change in schools. First, this study supports Hall's (1987) claim that the focus of change should be on the implementer who experiences concerns related to innovation in the areas of Self, Task, and Impact. The first three themes found in this research were (1) Principals experienced personal emotions to the changes brought forth by teacher leadership. They feel optimistic about the potential of the teacher leadership initiative, even as they undergo the challenges inherent to delegating leadership responsibility; (2) Principals experienced task concerns regarding the changes brought forth by teacher leadership. Because the teacher leadership initiative

requires principals to conduct new tasks and learn new skills, they feel overwhelmed and ill prepared to complete all that is expected of them; and (3) Principals feel enthusiastic about the impact of teacher leadership but uneasy regarding the unforeseen outcomes of the initiative. These three findings addressed the principals' concerns within the Self, Task, and Impact areas respectively. While principals expressed positive sentiments and enthusiasm regarding the significant impact the initiative would create for student learning, when they were asked about specific elements of teacher leadership, such as videotaping for reflection or forming a high-functioning leadership team, principals expressed concerns all along the Implementation Bridge (Hall, 1987).

Three of the four themes found in the first research question about how principals were managing change connected to Hall's Stages of Concern. The first theme addressed principals' personal concerns; the second addressed principals' task concerns; and the third addressed principals' impact concerns. Given the positive and negative elements each principal experienced throughout their implementation process, Hall's belief that principals move forward and backward depending on the time of year and context of the situation held true in this study. For instance, when principals had to delegate a responsibility that they enjoyed and felt highly skilled in doing, the principals reverted to the personal concern stage feeling jealousy and loss. Other times, when the principals were attending an engaging meeting where teacher leaders and staff members appeared to be motivated and enthusiastic, the principal moved forward on the bridge, considering the overall impact that TLC was having on teacher instruction and student learning.

The study revealed that principals were frustrated by the arbitrary guidelines set by the state department that related to percentage of participating teachers as well as the

requirement to hire leaders within one's own district. Additionally, principals felt that the state department did not offer solid reasoning behind their motivation for adding these requirements. Hall's suggested interventions would call for conversations and explanations; however, this type of intervention did not occur, and principals have not been interviewed throughout all of the years of the TLC evaluation phase.

This study found that as principals expressed concerns to their central office administrators, the administrators were able to identify relevant supports for the principals. Patterns found in the participant dialogue suggest that principals perceived that central office administrators were sensitive to their needs and offered them support in terms of ongoing conversations, chances for them to connect with others, and opportunities for them to attend training opportunities and conferences. These actions corroborated Hall's idea that implementers' concerns can serve as a guide for facilitators of change as they identify the implementers' needs and then locate supports that can guide the individuals' behaviors. When referencing Hall's suggested interventions that would support a facilitator of change in assisting an implementer of change, it can be noted that several of Hall's suggestions for assisting principals were mentioned in the participant dialogue. For instance, principals shared that while central office administrators did not provide principals with implementation feedback on their formal evaluations, the principals were offered advice in more informal ways, typically during one-on-one conversations. Principals also shared that their superintendents encouraged them to meet with area principals to share ideas and gain support. While the Department of Education did not ask principals about their implementation progress, the principals described meaningful discussions they held with their superintendents, brainstorming ideas for

utilizing the coaches in ways that would improve instruction. These findings align with Hall's (1987) work which suggests that facilitators (central office administrators) encourage innovators (principals) to share with others who are implementing the innovation. Hall encouraged frequent conversations between facilitators and implementers, where the facilitator offers positive feedback. Moreover, Hall suggested that facilitators assist the implementers in focusing their ideas toward continually searching for a better way. All three of Hall's aforementioned suggestions were mentioned multiple times by the participants in this study.

As the principals in this study described their quest for discovering the highest quality coaching model, the patterns within their dialogue gave the impression that the principals believed the ideal model would solve the issues brought forth by the teacher leadership initiative. Yet, Hall's notion that change cannot be accomplished through an inanimate object, such as a book or a curriculum, became clear. As principals compared the various models they were utilizing, participants expressed concerns and self-doubt that perhaps the model they had chosen was not the best one; yet, Hall contends that the model is not what creates effective change; rather it is the individual himself or herself. Thus, a system's focus should be more on how to improve the knowledge and skills of the educators and less about which resource one is utilizing.

Principals in this study were concerned about the limited time they had to complete all of the tasks expected of them. Principals listed their multitude of responsibilities and then went on to explain how the duties were multiplied by additional tasks at specific times of the year. One principal disclosed that he was not sure if there were students in the building on a particular day, because he was not able to leave his office. Some of the

principals talked about being busier than they had ever been, while another described his time management concerns as a circus spinning out of control. Hall (1987) explained that when implementers focus on concerns related to managing their time, they are at the Task Stage of implementation which is where the implementers are more focused on the duties they need to complete rather than the impact the change is creating. Thus principals who feel overwhelmed and stressed for time may be overly concentrated on the day to day issues inherent in teacher leadership, rather than considering the larger picture of how the teaching and learning culture is changing.

Hall's (1987) theory on how change implementers move along an Implementation Bridge throughout the Stages of Concern plays an important role in this research. While all principals expressed concerns about measuring the impact of teacher leadership, which places them at the end of the bridge, nearing full implementation, they also all expressed personal concerns, placing them in the first steps of the change process. It is important to note that education efforts are focused on continuous improvement, meaning that an initiative will never be complete. Rather, principals will continue to reflect and improve, redoing the cycle over and over, but never reaching a definitive end. Hall's data can inform the work of principals and their support systems as schools undertake a leadership initiative. Because principals in this study experienced waves of concern, moving back and forth along the bridge, the model can be applied in schools where the leadership structure is evolving. The following section explains how this study informs the practical aspects for state leaders, principal preparation and evaluator approval program leaders, central office administrators, and principals.

## **Implications for Practice**

The principals in this study revealed candidly honest reflections about the difficulties they are facing as they try to implement the teacher leadership initiative within their buildings. Other than the occasional survey or the brief, truncated media interview, principals have never been formally asked by state leaders or program evaluators to consider how the implementation process is going. Principals shared that they believe in the power of teacher leadership, but they also experience a range of concerns that wax and wane depending on the day and the administrative task they are completing. The goal for this implications section is to provide guidance for principals as they manage the changes brought forth by the teacher leadership initiative, as well as to provide guidance to central office administrators as they develop comprehensive support systems to help principals manage change.

### **Implications for Principals**

#### **Managing time.**

The principals I interviewed appeared to be rushed when we first began the interviews. They would hurry to the camera, apologizing for being even a minute late due to the prior meeting running beyond its allotted timeframe. Even as we visited, principals were frequently interrupted, as a teacher would request just one quick minute of the principals' time. It was quite obvious from my interviewing efforts that periods of inactivity are scarce in the life of a secondary school administrator.

As we visited, the principals referred to time as a valuable commodity. Overall, the general sense was that when principals retrospectively reflect upon their weeks, they find that they have addressed several management issues, but have lost track of the teaching



and learning process. Previous literature supports their concerns, stating that principals spend only 12.7% of their time on instruction (Maxwell, 2014). It is critical that principals set weekly goals and prioritize their time to reach a reasonable balance between managerial and instructional duties. At times, the principals may need to allow the special education issues and discipline matters slide lower on the priority list. If principals are able to find a new equilibrium between instruction and management, they may find more value in their work and be able to have a more significant influence on student learning. One might assume that teacher leadership positions would alleviate the work of the principal; however, principals' roles have only expanded to include responsibilities in supporting the teacher leaders.

### **Reframing the image.**

The research states that the principal's role changes within schools with distributed leadership structures shifting from a "hero" to a "hero maker" (Barth, 2001a). One principal in the study referred to the traditional role of principal as portraying God who embraced the all-knowing persona. The findings in this study revealed that principals want to change the traditional perception of the principal being one lone decision maker to a new understanding that principals are collaborative members of learning teams.

As principals continue learning alongside their teacher leaders and asking more questions rather than providing solutions, they will perceive themselves as a principals who wants to also grow professionally alongside their teachers The literature tells us that teacher leaders want more time with their principals (Mangin, 2007), so principals should embrace available opportunities to collaborate with teacher leaders in an ongoing and frequent manner. One of the five major goals of TLC is to promote collaboration, and it

should not be only among teachers. Principals should also play an integral role in the team structures.

### **Evaluating and coaching.**

The principals in this study reported that the teacher evaluation process was not helping teachers grow professionally, a finding supported in the literature on evaluation supports that finding (Marshall, 2013). Rather, principals believed that the TLC emphasis on the ongoing coaching process, which included observations, reflective conversations, modeling, practicing and evaluating strategies was the key to improving teacher performance. While the principals did not have a great deal of data to measure teacher improvement, the principals were primarily relying on observational and survey data as they described the changes brought forth through the coaching process.

A recommendation for principals is that they may consider how they can revise their district's current evaluation process to include components evident within the coaching models. This way the teacher leaders work with teachers would be more closely aligned to the feedback the teachers are receiving from the principals. While state law mandates that specific aspects of the teacher evaluation process, such as identifying criteria that the teacher has met and not met, the narrative portion of the evaluation process is more flexible. Perhaps the principals could spend less time writing and scripting about what they observed, and use practices from TLC that are found to have a greater impact. This might include taking the time to watch a video of the teacher's lesson and hold a reflective conversation around what each of them observed.

## **Implications for Central Office Administrators**

### **Providing principal supports.**

Principals in this study reported their desire for new learning opportunities regarding teacher leadership. Principals would benefit from the AEA providing an inventory of research-based coaching models, which identifies the advantages and drawbacks of each model. It would be helpful if the inventory explained how the models could be used interchangeably depending on the specific needs of the teachers.

Principals would also benefit if research institutions could provide list of research-based articles regarding the best ways to improve teachers' instructional practices. Principals could choose resources from the list that align to the district's mission and goals. Currently, the principals in this study are finding their own professional reading material, which contributes to the disjointed professional development efforts within each building. If principals were provided with a list of recommended reading, it would help the administrative team, including central office administrators and building principals, hold more informative leadership conversations with one another, given that they have a common background of information as they begin discussion.

Notably, in Chapter Four, principals who attend area consortium meetings said they appreciated the networking opportunities and new ideas they gained from meeting with others in the same position. Principals could consider reaching out to the Department of Education, AEAs, or SAI and request more networking meetings that directly relate to how principals are managing change brought forth by teacher leadership. Many principals expressed how difficult it was for them to find time to drive to the various trainings, so

principals should advocate that these support sessions are offered via webinars or video conferencing software.

Upon conducting a document review of the district teacher leadership plans and their subsequent reports, I found that none of the plans included supports for the building principals. The superintendent and directors might consider revising their teacher leadership plans to include the manner in which they plan to provide support and guidance to the principal. Even though all of the principals shared that they had experienced strong central office support, they acknowledged that the support was given when specific requests were placed, rather than planned reinforcements that the principals could anticipate from central office administrators.

#### **Participating in collaborative teams.**

Principals in this study reported that they had altered their level of involvement during district leadership team meetings in order to provide space for the teacher leaders' voices to be heard. This tactic may have been necessary at the inception of the teacher leadership initiative when teacher leaders were establishing their role and finding confidence in their positions. Now, however, one may consider establishing structures within the district meetings that encourage central office administrators, principals and teacher leaders to have an equal voice at the table. The literature underscores the importance of all parties being present at leadership meetings (Bolman, 2014); therefore, it is recommended that administrators be not only physically present, but also actively engaged. The findings in Chapter 4 portrayed the story of a negative interaction that occurred when the superintendent decreased his level of involvement with teacher leaders.

It caused the teacher leaders to question their own commitment given the appearance that administrators may not be fully engaged in the initiative.

One method of including all voices is to establish commitments from all team members regarding their work within the collaborative group. A suggestion by DuFour and Fullan (2013) is that members commit to building a shared knowledge and to establish processes for ongoing feedback among one another. These joint commitments are just a beginning to clarifying the work to be accomplished as well as to provide accountability for each member to participate.

**Providing consistency.**

A significant theme found in this study was that the bulk of professional development responsibilities had transferred from the district offices to the buildings. Principals found this change to be positive, in that they were able to move quicker with implementing their initiatives because they had fewer people to teach and coach. However, a danger exists when buildings are conducting their own work. It is possible that building teams may lose sight of the larger district's vision, mission and goals, resulting in several new programs that are unrelated to one another. District leaders typically create goals that are aligned from the district to the building to the learning teams to the individual teacher. Without this alignment, the real potential harm in this type of system is to the students. As students matriculate through the system, they become accustomed to the procedures in one building, but feel as if they are in a different world as they transition to the next building.

Because teacher leadership has influenced professional development to become more decentralized, the recommendation is to consider new ways to maintain a district

focus. One might consider the administrative team meet on a more frequent basis.. Another idea would be to create a tight and loose document (DuFour, 2013) with the administrative team that outlines which decisions are made at the district level and which decisions are flexible and can be made at the building level. By reaching consensus with the administrative team on which decisions are made at the district level, the central office staff is able to hold tight to the elements of professional development that they feel everyone should be consistent in implementing.

### **Implications for Principal Preparation and Evaluator Approval Programs**

New principals who have never led a staff under the traditional leadership structure may adjust more smoothly to the changes occurring with TLC, given that the teacher leadership structure is all they have ever known. Still it is important for principal preparation programs to offer them the knowledge and skills they need to lead teachers in a collaborative setting. New principals would benefit from training on instructional coaching so they understand how they can partner with teacher leaders who work with teachers on instruction. New principals would also benefit from training in how to hold reflective teacher meetings, to manage difficult discussions as well as to mediate intense conversations. The teacher leadership initiative has caused principals to spend additional time within the communication realm, and therefore, they need the skills and practice to address each of these scenarios effectively.

Experienced principals would also benefit from the training on instructional coaching and communication; however, they may also find value in learning about the stages of concern brought about by a change initiative as presented by Hall (1987).

This research identifies the types of concerns a principal may be experiencing and offers suggestions for coinciding supports that help alleviate the implementer's concerns. If principals understood this theory, they would be able to categorize their reactions to change and identify the actions they could take to alleviate their concerns.

In 2006, Iowa adopted the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL), and required school districts to align their principal evaluation to the standards (Mattson Almanzán, Sanders, Kearney, & WestEd, 2011). Universities in Iowa have preparation programs that operate within the ISSL requirements and address all three of recommendations above (Dr. Joanne Marshall, Iowa State University, Associate Professor, personal communication, March 27, 2018; Dr. Susan Yilek, University of Northern Iowa, Assistant Professor personal communication, March 28, 2018). Since the adoption of the ISSL standards, leaders of Iowa's universities have partnered with AEAs, SAI, and Department of Education representatives to analyze evaluation data, reflect on research, and seek best practices in evaluations that support teaching and learning (Mattson Almanzán et al., 2011).

### **Implications for Leaders at the Department of Education**

#### **Considering TLC parameters.**

Leaders at the state department would be wise to reconsider the parameters they established for implementing the teacher leadership initiative in the schools. The data from Chapter Four presents evidence that mandates specified within the teacher leadership guidelines are unreasonable in practice. For instance, the requirement that 25 percent of a school's teaching staff must assume leadership positions has shown to be an obstacle for local school districts. Administrators are finding that one quarter of their teachers do not desire, nor feel prepared for leadership. State leaders offered only one reason for requiring

the 25% threshold and that was they the leaders found this percentage to be favorable for elevating the profession; however, school leaders are not finding it feasible to implement. Rather, principals would like the freedom to recruit and hire teacher leaders from around the state or even from surrounding states. Yet, leaders at the state department worry that this idea would encourage “poaching” teachers from other school districts, thus establishing a competitive environment for human capital (State of Iowa Department of Education, 2015b).

Findings from Chapter Four also revealed that administrators are concerned with the requirement that teacher leaders had to hold three years’ experience and had to have been working in their district for a year. This condition also eliminates the possibility of recruiting and hiring staff who are ready for a leadership position, but who are required to teach for a year before having the chance to lead. Because administrators feel confined by these requirements, they are hiring positions and shuffling staff to places that may not be ideal, but fit the parameters presented in the initiative.

### **Rethinking the business model in education.**

State leaders may want to consider the premise behind the teacher leadership initiative that assumes teachers want to be promoted away from children and move to middle management positions. Especially in the case of secondary teachers who have obtained degrees in content areas such as science, math and English, the career potential beyond education is wide open. Educational leaders may want to reconsider the motivations behind teaching and provide incentives that match the teachers’ rationale for choosing the educational field.



### **Considering recent legislation.**

Finally, the potential fallout from the elimination of collective bargaining bill could be considered by state leaders. For instance, principals report that teachers feel a loss of job security, which, in turn, connects to a diminished feeling of trust with the administration. With no safeguards in place that guarantee teachers can eventually return to previously held positions, principals share that teachers feel unsure and are asking to return to the classroom in an effort to solidify their future career potential. Principals report that teacher leaders were already feeling anxiety given the uncertainty of continued funding; however, the elimination of many aspects within the collective bargaining bill only served to accentuate their worries.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

#### **Federal Teacher Leadership Grants**

The first recommendation for future research would be to conduct a qualitative case study on the two Iowa schools that received Federal Teacher Leadership Grants in conjunction with the Iowa Grant. It would be enlightening to learn about how the extra resources, supports and trainings these two schools received at a federal level impacted the goals put forth in Iowa's teacher leadership initiative. For instance, did these schools witness gains student achievement or did the teachers experience increased job satisfaction? As well as studying the impact of the federal grant, secondary principals in Iowa could learn about how the secondary principals in these two schools with federal grants addressed pitfalls and roadblocks they encountered. They could also share the types of supports that the federal agencies offered to them. This kind of research would offer a

comparison of two different implementation processes for principals to consider when looking for ideas to manage the changes they are experiencing.

### **Teacher Leadership Retention**

The second recommendation would be to examine why some schools have teacher leaders leaving their positions to return to the classroom while other schools are experiencing no teacher leadership turnover. One is left to wonder whether particular conditions exist within the school culture or in relation to the teacher leadership job descriptions that entice teacher leaders to remain within their positions. Similarly, are certain aspects of a teacher leadership position unappealing to teachers, motivating them to leave the positions and return to the classroom? This research would be helpful because principals could hold a clearer understanding of the factors that discourage teacher leaders and identify supports that teacher leaders need to remain in their positions.

### **School Culture**

The final recommendation for future research is to study how the teacher leadership initiative affects the school's culture. While principals reported that TLC caused increased teacher collaboration focused on improved instruction, the principals also sensed an undercurrent of jealousy and mistrust among their staff members. School reforms may affect the school culture in a good way or produce the opposite effect. It would be interesting to understand how a school culture is affected when both positive and negative influences to the culture are occurring simultaneously.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative project was to understand how principals perceive their changing roles in light of the teacher leadership initiative. Utilizing data from 24

interviews with 12 principals as well as a thorough document review of teacher leadership plans and follow-up reports, this study indicates that principals feel positive about the overall initiative and believe in the impact it can provide for students, while at the same time feel a wide range of concerns related to their changing leadership roles. This study shared stories of schools that are changing learning cultures in positive ways, as well as principals' accounts of obstacles they met and frustrations they encountered. The wide spectrum of principals' experiences tells a comprehensive tale of the teacher leadership implementation process.

The results of the study shared four recommendations for principals to manage change. The first was to prioritize their time; the second was to reframe the perception they held regarding a traditional principal; the third was to reconsider their evaluation procedures to determine if the coaching method could be incorporated into the process; and the last recommendation was to recognize the new social aspect that is required from the principal positions. The study also suggested recommendations for central office administrators, which were to strengthen the capacity of the district's collaborative teams, to establish a district wide map for professional development in an effort to maintain consistency among building initiatives, and finally, to provide resources for principals to access professional research related to their leadership practices. Next, this study provided ideas for preparation and evaluator approval programs to consider. These included a consideration of training on coaching, communication, and change. Finally, the study provided recommendations for state leaders at the Department of Education. The suggestions included recommending an examination of the requirements present in the current teacher leadership legislation and the obstacles those requirements place on local

school districts as well as a consideration of how teacher leadership is affecting Iowa's teacher shortage. The chapter concluded with recommendations for future research.

This study holds significance for principals, central office administrators, principal preparation and evaluator approval trainers, and leaders at Iowa's Department of Education. Secondary principals can read the personal accounts of others in their position that have implemented teacher leadership initiatives and learn from their experiences. Principals will realize their concerns are not unique and one of the best ways to manage those concerns is by reaching out to others in similar positions. My hope is that principals will find comfort by reading this research and find avenues to share their own experiences in hopes of helping others. As principals become more comfortable with distributed leadership, they will have a stronger and more positive impact on teacher leaders and teachers. In turn, the teachers will be more knowledgeable and confident in positively influencing their students' learning. The shift from traditional leadership to distributed leadership via Iowa's teacher leadership initiative is a complex change in Iowa's educational system. All levels of stakeholders are affected, and all are being asked to adjust the manner they had traditionally done business. This type of multi-tiered change brings forth a wealth of emotion and concerns; however, the participants in this study have said that the benefits are worth the struggles. Principals are professionals who are important in assuring that quality teachers are in every classroom. As Iowa's secondary principals implement the changes required by the statewide teacher leadership initiative, it is important that they feel supported by central office administrators throughout the implementation process.

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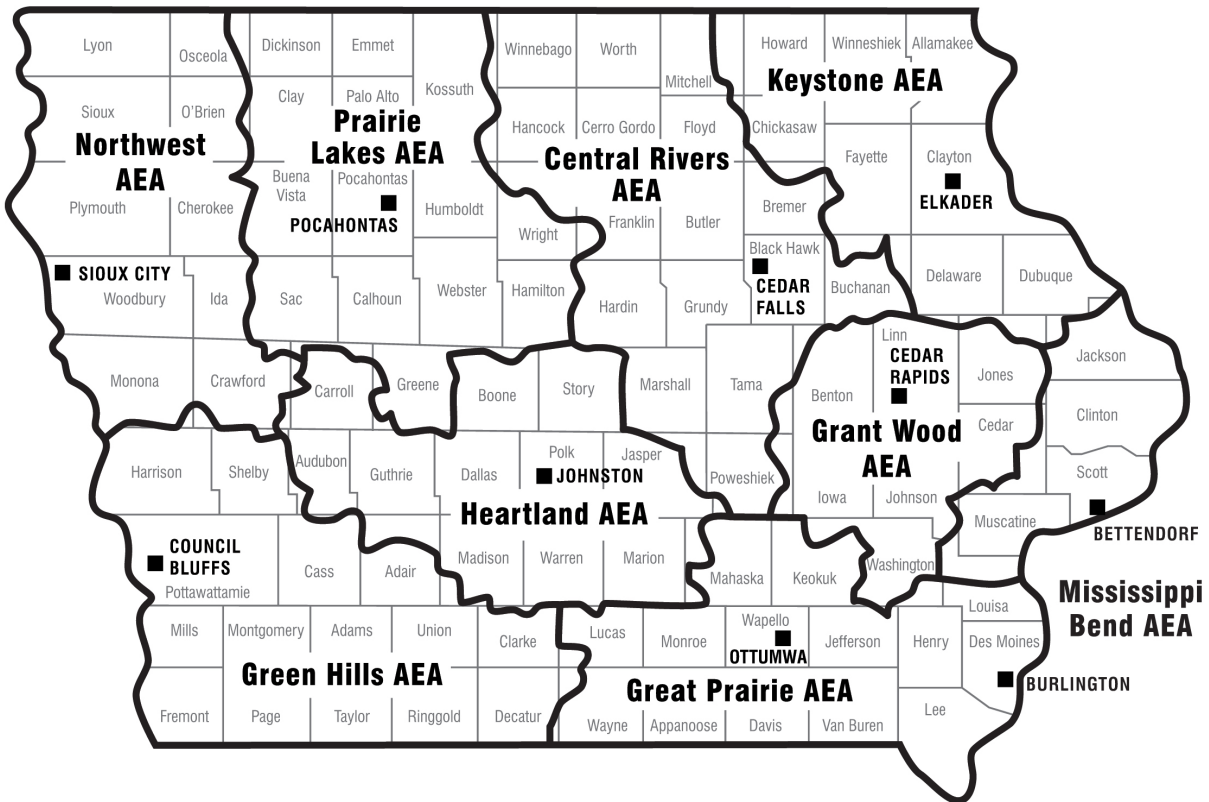
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## APPENDIX A. MAP OF IOWA'S AREA EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES



**APPENDIX B. EMAIL TO SUPERINTENDENT REQUESTING  
SECONDARY PRINCIPAL PARTICIPATION**

Dear Iowa Superintendent,

I am emailing you today to request your school's participation in my research study regarding how principals are reacting to their changing role in light of the Teacher Leadership Initiative. I am writing to ask if you would allow your principal to be interviewed two times over a period of two months regarding how they are adjusting to the implementation of the Teacher Leadership Initiative in your district.

As you may be aware, recent evaluations of the program have utilized survey data from principals, but interviews were limited to only to teachers and teacher leaders. I am interested in hearing directly from the principals regarding any concerns they may have as they work to implement teacher leadership in their districts.

If you agree to allow your principal to participate, I ask that you sign a memo agreeing that their participation and answers to interview questions will not affect their current positions in any way. If this sounds acceptable to you, could you please respond to this email with your agreement? I will then send you the memo to sign. Once I receive the memo, I will reach out to one of your secondary principals and request their time to participate in this study.

Please let me know if you have any concerns or questions. I appreciate your consideration in allowing me to conduct this study.

Sincerely,

Lori Phillips

**APPENDIX C. SUPERINTENDENT MEMO TO PRINCIPALS**

To: Research Participants

From: District Superintendent

Re: Participation in research regarding the principals' evolving role in the teacher leadership initiative

The purpose of this memo is to assure you that your participation in the research project conducted by Lori Phillips is indeed voluntary. Please understand that you will not be penalized for your choice on whether or not to participate. Additionally, you will not be penalized for anything that you share during the interviews.

Your choice of whether to participate will not affect your job evaluations in any way.

Please contact me if you have questions.

Superintendent Signature

**APPENDIX D. RECRUITMENT EMAIL**

Dear Secondary Principal,

My name is Lori Phillips, and I am student at Iowa State University. I am conducting a research study about the secondary principal's evolving roles in light of the Teacher Leadership Initiative.

I am emailing you today to request your participation in my research study regarding how principals are reacting to their changing role in light of the Teacher Leadership Initiative. As you may be aware, recent evaluations of the program have utilized survey data from principals, but interviews were limited to only to teachers and teacher leaders. I am interested in hearing directly from the principals regarding any concerns they may have as they work to implement teacher leadership in their districts.

I value the principals' thoughts, so I am writing to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed two times for approximately two hours for each interview. I would like to interview you using the videoconferencing software, Zoom. This way, you will be able to respond to my questions from the comfort of your office or even your living room. I intend to ask you questions regarding your feelings about teacher leadership as well as how central office staff may be supporting you throughout implementation of your teacher leadership program.

I plan to share the results of my study with school leaders and educational policy makers in order to help them understand the need for new and different supports for principals in their new roles.

When results are shared as part of a publication or research conference, general identifiers will be used when describing a school. For example, it may be stated that the school is in Iowa, provide an enrollment range or describe the school as rural or urban. When reporting about participants, the study will list age ranges and experience in spans rather than provide specific ages or exact years of experience. If the study references experiences of others, those people will be provided with pseudonyms.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you agree to participate, you may stop at any time you feel uncomfortable. I will provide you with a signed memo from your superintendent with assurances that your participation and/or responses will not influence your job in any way.

If you have any questions about participating in this study, please let me know. I hope you will consider being a part of this study. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lori Phillips

## **APPENDIX E. INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

### **Informed Consent for Secondary Principals in Iowa**

Principal Investigator       Lori Phillips  
Organization   Iowa State University  
Dissertation   Evolving Role of the Secondary Principal

#### **Introduction**

I am Lori Phillips, a student at Iowa State University, and I am inviting you to participate in a research study regarding the evolving role of the secondary principal. You may discuss this research with anyone and you may take a couple of days to reflect on whether you want to participate. If there are words or concepts that you do not understand throughout this process, you may ask questions at any time.

#### **Purpose of Research**

The state of Iowa recently passed legislation that allowed school districts to hire teacher leaders. I am interested in how the teacher leaders will influence principals' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. I believe that your insight as a secondary principal in Iowa will help me understand how principals perceive this change in leadership structure. This research will involve two interviews that will last between one and two hours each.

You have been asked to participate because you are a principal in Iowa. Educational leaders in Iowa may be interested in the results of this study and may use the findings to plan future professional development for principals. I will obtain verbal and written assurance from your superintendent that participation in this study will not hinder your job security or standing in any way.

#### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is purely voluntary. Your superintendent may be interested in the findings of this research; however, he has provided written documentation in the form of a signed memo that your participation is voluntary. My goal is to eliminate any anxiety regarding these interviews so that your answers can be honest and candid. If you choose to not participate, your choice will have no influence on your current job standing, any work-related evaluations or reports. You may change your mind as the study progresses and stop participating at any time.

**Procedure**

The interview questions will focus on your current role as secondary principal as well as how you may see your role changing in light of new teacher leadership roles. Additionally, I will ask you to describe the supports you are receiving from central office staff. The questions will be asked in a semi-structured format, allowing you the freedom to expand on your answers if needed. You have the right to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

The interview will be recorded, but will remain confidential. Within 7 days following the interviews, I will provide you with a transcript of each interview, including my questions and your answers. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript and include any additions or revisions that you deem necessary. No one other than my supervising faculty member, Dr. Marshall, the personnel at the transcriptions service (Rev.com) and myself will have access to the data.

**Duration**

The data collection will take place over the fall and spring terms. During that time, I will visit with you two times over two months.

**Risks**

These interview questions will be focused on your current position as secondary principal. There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information. Please understand that you do not have to answer any question if it feels too personal, confusing, difficult to answer, or requires you to reveal something that you do not want to share.

**Benefits**

The results of this study maybe used to plan professional development for you and your colleagues around the types of supports you can offer to teacher leaders.

You will not be provided any financial incentive to take part in this research.

**Confidentiality**

I will not be sharing any personal information with anyone outside the scope of this project. The interviews will take place during the fall and spring terms. You may interview from your personal office or any space where you feel you will have the privacy you need. I will interview you via Zoom videoconferencing software from my private office at Dallas Center Grimes School District. Any discussion about the study will take place only in the private locations of my office and the space where you choose to be interviewed. All data will be kept in locked files or on my password-protected laptop under an encrypted file. Your name will not appear on any forms and you will be identified with only a number.

Please be aware that although I will implement several measures to protect your privacy and keep your identity confidential, it is possible that when the results of the study are shared, a person who is familiar with Iowa Schools may be able to deduct your identity. The results of this study will be shared with school leaders across Iowa. School leaders may include superintendents, principals and state policy makers. While the school leaders will be able to deduct that the information came from principals in Iowa school districts, the study will not directly link any specific comments to specific individuals.

Study results may be shared beyond the superintendent and school board as part of a dissertation, publication and/or research conference. When results are shared as part of these larger outlets, general identifiers will be used with describing the school. For instance, it could be stated that the school is in Iowa, it could provide an enrollment range, it could describe the school as urban or rural. When reporting about participants, age ranges and experience spans rather than specific ages or exact years or experiences will also be used. If I share experiences that include others, they will also be provided with pseudonyms.

Internal and external regulatory agencies such as the IRB may inspect study records for quality assurance.

## Questions

If you have any questions about this study or the processes used, please contact Lori Phillips, Principal Investigator at (515) 986-0105 or Dr. Joanne Marshall, Supervising Faculty (515) 294-9995.

If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

**I have read the information about Lori's dissertation, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.**

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F. IRB APPROVAL

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
 OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

 Institutional Review Board  
 Office for Responsible Research  
 Vice President for Research  
 2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202  
 Ames, Iowa 50014  
 515 294-4566

**Date:** 12/13/2017  
**To:** Lori Phillips  
 101 Cyclone Lane  
 Madrid, Iowa 50212  
**CC:** Dr. Joanne Marshall  
 N229D Lagomarcino  
**From:** Office for Responsible Research  
**Title:** Evolution of the Principal Role in the Era of Teacher Leadership  
**IRB ID:** 16-291  
**Approval Date:** 12/12/2017  
**Date for Continuing Review:** 7/4/2018  
**Submission Type:** Modification  
**Review Type:** Expedited

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University according to the dates shown above. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- Use only the approved study materials in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.
- Retain signed informed consent documents for 3 years after the close of the study, when documented consent is required.
- Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes to the study by submitting a Modification Form for Non-Exempt Research or Amendment for Personnel Changes form, as necessary.
- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.
- Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- Complete a new continuing review form at least three to four weeks prior to the date for continuing review as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Please be aware that IRB approval means that you have met the requirements of federal regulations and ISU policies governing human subjects research. Approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. IRB approval in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office for Responsible Research, 202 Kingland, to officially close the project.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu).



## **APPENDIX G. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FIRST INTERVIEW**

### Interview Questions

#### Related to Research Question #1

1. Tell me about yourself. Please include your education and your years of experience in your current position.
2. How would you describe your leadership style? How do you think your leadership style influences the work of the teacher leaders?
3. Generally speaking, explain your understanding of the teacher leadership program in Iowa?
4. What are your concerns regarding the teacher leadership initiative in Iowa? Do you have any additional concerns with teacher leadership in your building? (Self) Concerns)
5. How have your duties changed given the teacher leadership initiative? (Task Concerns)
6. What impact is teacher leadership having on the teaching and learning process in your school (Impact Concerns)
7. Describe your daily interactions with teacher leaders.
8. How would you describe your responsibilities as you work with teacher learning teams?
9. What types of supports are teacher leaders requesting from you?
10. How would you explain the climate of your school? How would you describe your school climate in relationship to teacher leadership? What have you implemented in order to establish the climate you currently have?

#### Related to Research Question #2

11. When the superintendent or directors suggest a change for your building, what are your initial questions?
12. As you reflect on your district's policies and procedures, how would you describe the central office staff's beliefs regarding shared leadership?
13. How do the job descriptions for principals and teacher leaders reflect those beliefs?
14. How do the evaluations for principals and teacher leaders reflect those beliefs?
15. How are the teacher leaders within your district

- recruited?
- hired?
- evaluated?

16. How often to you visit with central office staff regarding the teacher leadership initiative?

17. How does central office staff support your work with teacher leaders?

18. Describe the trainings you have taken that helped you prepare for the changes in your principal role.

19. What is your biggest fear about the Teacher Leadership Program?

20. What are your biggest hopes for the Teacher Leadership Program?

21. Are there other things you would like to share about how teacher leadership has affected your role as a secondary principal in Iowa?

## **APPENDIX H. POTENTIAL FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SECOND INTERVIEW**

### **Potential Follow Up Questions:**

#### Related to Research Question #1

1. How much time each week do you spend meeting with your teacher leaders?
2. In the time since we last spoke, how have you supported the teacher leaders in your building?
3. If you were to categorize that time with teacher leaders, how much time is spent
  - Planning?
  - Evaluating?
  - Coaching?
4. Please describe what the conversations sound like when you are discussing
  - Planning?
  - Evaluating?
  - Coaching?

#### Related to Research Question #2

5. What job responsibilities are currently assigned to the teacher leaders that you would like to be doing? Why?
6. Specify the types of supports you would like to receive from central office that could improve the implementation of the Teacher Leadership Initiative.
7. How have you connected with outside stakeholders or state legislators regarding the teacher leadership initiative?
8. Since we last spoke, what new thoughts or ideas do you have about teacher leadership initiative in your building?

